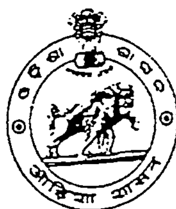
TOWARDS MERGER



Orissa State Archives

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TOWARDS MERGER

Integration of the Princely States of Orissa

ORISSA STATE ARCHIVES
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FOREWARD

The present attempt is to focus light on the period of rapid changes in the political map of India as well as in our state around 1947. Authors have endeavoured to shape the contours of developments like peoples' mobilisation at a sub-terranean level amongst tribal and peasantry populations by relying on primary data.

Princes were one of the prime movers at this point of time and a large number of articles are on their hopes, aspirations, efforts to organise themselves for their political future etc. Some articles go in to the subjects of administrative mechanism in the Feudatory States as well as tenurial systems in the *Garjat* areas. A better appreciation of these aspects shall only go towards enrichment of our understanding of Orissa's history.

Orissa State Archives have ceaselessly tried to strengthen writing of social history of Orissa. With this edition, the effort is further consolidated. I compliment my colleagues in the Archives under the able and dedicated leadership of Sri Prahlad Sahoo, Superintendent, State Archives.

(ASIT TRIPATHY)
Director & Addl. Secy. to Govt.
Department of Tourism & Culture

PREFACE

Between 1947 and 1949, all-600 ruling princes in India were pensioned off and their ancestral domains were submerged in the body politic of the Indian Union. This integration, according to Ian Copland, represented a major watershed. For Orissa it was infact the most significant event, as in the prolonged search for her identity she got a finishing point. It swelled the area of the New Orissa State and Greater Orissa sprang up.

The integration of the *Garjats* with Orissa culminated after a prolonged process. It passed through many hazy steps. In the first phase of the 20th century many new leaders provided potent source of inspiration to this move. by their speeches (as reported in the periodicals). The consciousness of the tribals and the peasants in both the zones, awakening in the *Garjats* against the tyrannical and authoritative rule of the chiefs and awakening in the coastal belt in Orissa against colonialism lent support to merger. Many people in both the zones articulated a common cultural identity which would only take shape by merger. Politically and economically the merger was indispensable for a stable new Orissa. It is true that many of the *Garjat* Chiefs eagerly wanted the formation of the Eastern States' Union. But leaders like Harekrushna Mahtab, Sarangadhar Das and many *Prajamandal* workers were determined for the merger of the two zones. They insisted on the merger for the establishment of an

economically stable Orissa and for the preservation of Oriya culture and tradition. Despite decades of rapid and radical political change in India and Orissa, diplomacy of the princes, strategic thinking of the *Garjat* leaders, *darbari* administrative rationalization and Constitutional reforms, merger was accepted as the only possible solution of the problem.

This book unfolds the story of pre-merger and merger of the feudatory states in Orissa on the basis of reliable archival documents. The learned contributors have taken care to unravel the darker aspects of the study of *Garjat* politics in the first half of the 20th century. They have concentrated on the problems - awakening in the *Garjats* as an important stage for merger, story of the prolonged steps (political and diplomatic) for integration, merger as an important assertion of Oriya identity, contribution of Harekrushna Mahtab for integration, status of the princes during and after merger etc. from new perspectives. I sincerely thank them for the pain they took to sketch an outline of their respective topics. I am sure that the work will receive due recognition from scholars in and outside India.

Due to official engagements it was not possible on my part to go minutely through the proof sheets. It is humbly submitted that the responsibility for the errors must remain mine alone, but for the context the individual authors are responsible.

I am thankful to the staff of Orissa State Archives for helping me in compiling this volume and prepare the press copy.

I acknowledge gratefully my indebtedness to the eminent litterateur of erudition, Sri Janaki Ballav Pattnayak, the

Honourable Chief Minister, Orissa, Sri Bhupinder Singh, Honourable Minister, Tourism and Culture, Sri S.B. Misra, I.A.S., Chief Secretary to Government of Orissa, Sri D.N. Padhi, I.A.S., Commissioner-Cum-Secretary to government of Orissa, Tourism & Culture Department and Sri A.K. Tripathy, I.A.S., Director, Culture whose appreciation for such publication programme of State Archives encouraged me to take up such research oriented volume in the interest of the scholarly world.

Bhubaneswar,
Utkal Divas.
(1 April 1998)

Prahlad Sahoo
Orissa State Archives.

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THE END OF THE BRITISH RAJ VIS-A-VIS THE PRINCELY STATES OF INDIA

Manmath Nath Das

At the end of India's freedom struggle when the dawn of Independence was in sight, the British resorted to the policy of 'divide and quit' with a relentless determination as the arbiters of India's destiny when an undeclared communal civil war darkened the prospects of the birth of a great republic.

From the days of the *Swadeshi* Movement in the first decade of the 20th century, the rulers diplomatically separated the Muslims from the Hindus in constitutional spheres and thereby gave politics a communal shape which ultimately culminated in Jinnah's Two Nation Theory and demand for Pakistan. The coming of Independence, thus, got coupled with formation of Pakistan, even though of a smaller size. The objective of making India into Hindustan and Pakistan having been conceptually achieved before partition, the British devoted themselves to achieve their next objective namely the Balkanization of the sub-continent.

Right from the beginning of the British conquest of India and during the long process of imperial expansion, the East India Company as well as the British Crown aimed at and succeeded in dividing India into two distinct identities, namely, the 'British India' and the 'Indian India'. 'While the former was administered directly by the British, the latter was kept under the authority of the native chiefs.

Several factors were responsible for the creation of a native India among which are included three major issues, namely, the vastness of the Indian landmass causing immense administrative problem due to great distances, inaccessible areas to which the foreign conquerors could not penetrate with ease, and, above all, the necessity of creating a class of ruling chiefs as the most loyal and faithful sub-ordinates of the British Monarch to keep under control an enormous native population.

With that kind of political arrangement prevailing for long, the prospect of Independence of India suddenly brought into surface the complex problem of the future of the so-called Princely states. Be it noted here that no where on earth in any single country at any single point of time, there existed so many as 565 princes as in India during the British period. On the eve of Independence it dawned upon the mind of every concerned party, be it the British, the National Congress, the Muslim League or the Princes themselves that the future of 'princedoms' would create no less a problem than the creation of Pakistan.

Among the native states there was as big a state as Hyderabad which was bigger in size and population than some of

the biggest national States of Europe. There were also many tiny states as small as a few square miles in area with a population of a few thousands only. Yet, the princes as a class regarded themselves as the legitimate rulers of their subjects by virtue of their hereditary right (even 'divine right') as long as, of course, the British Paramount Power remained bound by its supreme obligation "to protect the rulers and their dynasties from external aggression or internal revolt."

The story of most of these rulers - the *Maharajas*, the *Rajas*, the Nawabs and the Nizam - sounds like the Tales of the Arabian Nights. Some of them were more despotic than even the Czars of Russia; some of them more voluptuous than the Bourbons of France; and all of them were proud of their exalted position as the rulers of men on earth. Evidences go to show that while a few of the rulers were endowed with some kind of narrow political outlook or foresight, most of them were ignorant enough not to understand the signs of changing times. In their collective wisdom, the princes as a class lived under a tragic illusion that the British Indian Empire was timeless and deathless, and that their invisible Emperor in Britain was the most powerful and invincible ruler on earth whose destiny could never be affected by the National Congress or a Gandhi. So, as long as the Emperor ruled, so too would rule the Indian princes, big or small. Basking under that sunshine of hope, they did not care to take seriously the fast developing situations, namely, the *Prajamandal* Movements and the popular unrest in their own states, and secondly, the growing menace from the side of the Indian National Congress and the Popular Movement for Freedom in

adjoining British administered territories which deeply influenced the subjects of the Princely rulers. They also closed their eyes to the constitutional and political advance of the people in British Provinces while the people of the Native States remained as backward as ever before.

The rude shock to the princely order, however, came rather abruptly when the twilight of the sunset covered the *Raj*. In the torrents of events following the Second World War, not only did Fascism and Nazism got buried deep in grave but also Western imperialism in Asia received signals of its apparent death in no time. The Quit India Revolution of 1942 had already sounded the death knell of the British Empire. Fall of Winston Churchill from power in 1945, unrest in the Indian army following the legacy of the Azad Hind Fouz, and the threat of the National Congress for a final onslaught to driveaway the British, unnerved the Labour Government in Britain so deeply that they decided to transfer power to the Indian hands honourably and depart from the Empire without the stigma of a disastrous retreat. But before the British left, they thought it wise to play their last heinous acts to reduce India to shambles by creating Pakistan as well as by giving the native States freedom to decide their own future. In this latter game, the British statesmen demonstrated the worst aspect of their diplomacy – a diplomacy that aimed at breaking India to three parts, Hindustan, Pakistan and Princestans.

Winston Churchill, who had never entertained the idea of giving India Independence found himself out of tune with the needs of the hour which the Labour Government had grasped at

the end of the War, keeping in view the emerging world situation. Churchill seldom tried to compromise his ideology of imperialism with the forces of nationalism. But, though helpless when out of power, he was yet the Leader of the Opposition to utilise that position for mischief. In his vision of Indian Independence, he therefore thought of three prominent issues as the imperatives of the British withdrawal. Firstly, Muhammad Ali Jinnah should be given 'Greater Pakistan of his dream including the whole of Punjab in the west and whole of Bengal and Assam in the east. Secondly, the major native states of India like Hyderabad, Kashmir, Bikaner, Travancore, Jodhpur, Bhopal, etc., should be recognised as independent States at the lapse of the British Paramountcy (And those States should obviously enjoy British protection under new and separate treaties), and the smaller States should be organised into groups and enjoy the status of independent states (also under British protection) Thirdly, the remaining portions of the sub-continent could be granted independence to create a Hindustan, with, of course, big chunks of the landmass passing as Pakistan and equally big chunks of scattered territories here and there, remaining as princely India as during the British days.

That the designs of Churchill like day dreams were not unknown to Prime Minister Attlee and the last two British Viceroys Wavell and Mountbatten. They, however, comforted themselves that while Pakistan was almost a certainty (however small in size); the question of princely independence could be delayed till the very last moment through constitutional wranglings and legal intricacies.

It is in this background that the last days of the native princes took shape through confusions towards extinction. The princes were so hopeful about their secured position that when the Cabinet Mission visited India in the summer of 1946, the "Rulers were unanimous in demanding that Paramountcy should not be transferred to any 'Third Party' (Viz. any successor Government of India), and His Majesty's Government accepted this proposition." (Vide note on the position of the princes, political Department, February 1947). The Cabinet Mission could not think of a Complete merger of the states with the Indian Union; and aware of the popular unrest in most native states against their rulers could not also think of the total independence of the States. In their famous statement of 16 May 1946 the Mission, therefore, made the confusion worse confounded by declaring that "the relationship which has hitherto existed between the Rulers of the States and the British Crown will no longer be possible, Paramountcy can neither be retained by the British Crown nor transferred to the new Government (of India)". (Vide statement by Cabinet Mission, 16 May 1946).

The Cabinet Mission further suggested that the States should better negotiate about the modalities of their cooperation or relation with the new Government or Governments and decide the new constitutional structure when the transfer of power was to take place.

The statement of the Cabinet Mission created a difficult situation for the native states both collectively and singly. Most of the princes felt that they had the right to decide their future in their own way, possibly with negotiation with the future

government of India or possibly without any negotiation whatsoever. To the rulers of the bigger States like Hyderabad or Kashmir, it appeared that the issue of negotiation was irrelevant when they would emerge as sovereign independent States after the departure of the British. The smaller States though feeling unsecured, presented a brave face when in January 1947, they passed the resolution, saying; "The States will retain all subjects and powers other than those ceded by them to the Union. Paramountcy will terminate at the close of the interim period and will not be transferred to or inherited by the new Government of India. All the rights surrendered by the States to the Paramount Power will return to the States. The proposed Union of India will, therefore, exercise only such functions in relation to the States in regard to Union subjects as are assigned or delegated by them to the Union. Every State shall continue to retain its sovereignty and all rights and powers to the extent that those rights and powers have been expressly delegated by it. There can be no question of any powers being vested or inherent or implied in the Union in respect of the States unless specifically agreed to by them". (Vide Resolution of Princes, 29 January 1947).

When the last British Viceroy Mountbatten left England in March 1947 to handover power to Indian hands, the British Prime Minister gave him the following instructions regarding the future of the Indian States : " It is of course important that the Indian States should adjust their relations with the authorities to whom it is intended to handover power in British India ; but was explicitly stated by the Cabinet Mission, His Majesty's Government do not intend to handover their powers and

obligations under Paramountcy to any successor Government. It is not intended to bring Paramountcy as a system to a conclusion earlier than the date of the final transfer of power but you are authorised, at such time as you think appropriate, to enter into negotiations with individual States for adjusting their relations with the Crown." (Vide Mountbatten Papers, No. 116, Attlee to Mountbatten, March 1947)

Mountbatten on arrival saw the aggressive posture of the Congress on the question of future of the States. Mahatma Gandhi told the Viceroy straightaway that "The princes were really the creation of the British; that many of them had been gradually created up from small chieftains to the position they now hold because the British realised that they would become strong allies of the British power under the system of Paramountcy". Gandhi asked the viceroy to handover power to Indian central government without thinking about the position of the princes (Vide MBP, 190, Interview No. 30, Gandhi, 4 April 1947)

Jinnah, in the meantime was hopeful that the Nizam of Hyderabad, the Nawab of Bhopal, and all other Muslim Princes would readily join Pakistan once the new states were born. Alarmed by such ominous developments, the Congress High Command decided to teach a lesson to the princes who did not want to join the Constituent Assembly and indulged in wild dreams of 'independence' or joining of Pakistan. On 18 April 1947, Jawaharlal Nehru declared at the All India States People's Conference at Gwalior that " those states that did not join the Constituent Assembly now would be regarded as hostile states and would have to bear the consequences of being so regarded."

With this warning to the princes, Nehru called upon the *Prajamandals* of various States to demand the setting up of Constituent Assemblies in their respective States to frame their own Constitutions. (Vide Nehru's speech reproduced in the *Statesman*, 20 April 1947).

When Nehru dropped this bomb shell, most princes took it as a challenge, and one of them, the *Maharaja*-Rana of Dholpur rushed to the Viceroy to suggest that the British should stay on in India to rule their Empire till the princes gained their independence. The Viceroy felt astonished that when the British were about to leave the Empire, there could be still such stupid rulers who suffered " From a belief in the Divine right of Kings!" (Vide MBP, file 213, Viceroy's Personal Report, No,15). Still more absurd was the decision of the Nawab of Bhopal to appeal to the Viceroy," Those states requiring modern arms and equipment should receive them before the British finally leave India. To fail to do this will be to ensure anarchy and civil war. In my particular case I wish to convert one of my army units into a modern mechanised formation complete with light tanks and the connected equipments and the required reserves of ammunition" (Vide MBP, 142, Nawab of Bhopal to Viceroy, 30 April 1947).

The Nizam, of course, was sure of Hyderabad's complete sovereign independence with the blessings of Churchill, Attlee, Mountbatten and Jinnah. But without such assured promise from Churchill or Jinnah, yet with Mountbatten's tacit support, the Maharaja of Kashmir not only felt certain of his sovereign independence but also thought of the annexation of much of the

adjoining Himalayan territories to Kashmir, as ascertained from his horoscope by an astrologer.

Days were running out for such wild fancies when the Plan for Partition and Independence was being finalised during the month of May 1947. The princes as a class did not present any effective leadership to plead for their future status. As a result, on 3 June 1947, when the Plan was finally announced to the Indian people, the position of the native States was kept as vague as under the Cabinet Mission Plan. How deceitful and dubious was the British intention in respect of the future of the Princely India, can be easily understood from what Mountbatten thought about it after announcing the date of Independence as 15 August 1947.

"If any of the Indian States claims to have taken back Paramountcy from the quitting British Power and wants to enter into separate treaty with His Majesty's Government," asked a journalist, "would His Majesty's Government be prepared to enter into treaty with that Indian State either from an economic or military point of view?"

Mountbatten replied : "If an Indian State were to come to me with such a request, I should refer it to His Majesty's Government ..... If you ask me further details I really cannot answer." (Vide Viceroy's Press Conference, 4 June 1947).

The Congress could at once realise the implications of the British policy which did not take into consideration the economic integration which the British themselves had worked out between British India and Indian India through various agreements with

the princes. It became apparent that the end of the British Paramountcy would forthwith lead to the collapse of the country's economic structure. The Viceroy strengthened this fear when he announced," The Indian States have never been British territory. They have been independent States in Treaty Relations with the British. Are you suggesting that we, as our last act, should tear up those Treaties and say we are going to compel them to join this or that new Constituent Assembly ? And how are we going to enforce it ?....... I cannot go back on a pledge given and based on Treaties entered into many years ago." (Vide the Viceroy's statement, 4 June 1947).

It stunned the Congress leadership that the Labour Government in Britain had no feeling whatsoever towards the teeming millions of people of the native States. The British manifested their excessive desire to safeguard the interest of the oppressive rulers. The Congress had to act immediately to put an end to the British game. The Muslim League also wanted to see the princes independent, aware of the fact that Pakistan was not going to get any share from the Princely world because almost all of the States existed within the orbit of Hindustan.

The affairs of the States were so far being managed by the British through their Political Department. When the British departure became imminent, the Political Department began to close down their Residencies and the Agencies in the States. The Officers of those agencies before their departure, instigated the princes to get ready for their independence. Information about such developments compelled Nehru as the leader of the Interim Government to warn the Viceroy: "The whole policy of the

Political Department has caused us a great deal of uneasiness. It can only be described in Mr. Winston Churchill's language as Operation Scuttle. It seems to be deliberately intended to break up the administrative unity of India which the Government of India and Paramountcy have maintained." (Vide MBP, 142, Nehru to Mountbatten, 4 June 1947)

The argument of the British Political Department was that the Princely States represented more than one third of the Indian territory and more than a fourth of India's population, and therefore, they had a right to exists, as such. In fact, some British officers worked under the illusion that they would continue the work as the advisers or Ministers of the Princes once they became independent. Walter Monckton, who worked as an adviser to the Nizam, went to the extent of pleading that the State of Hyderabad had more inhabitants than any other British Dominion including Canada; and in area it was almost equal to France. Confident of the Nizam's future as a sovereign monarch, Monkton thought of increasing the size of the Nizam's army and of establishing munitions factories. (Vide MBP, 70, Note of Walter Mankton, 9 June 1947).

Machinations of the Nizam and some other princes were no hidden secrets to the Congress. The leaders, therefore, demanded to close down the Political Department and set up a States Department to deal with the princes. Through much persuasion, pressure, bitter bickering between the Congress and the League, and finally threats from the Congress High Command that the Viceroy at last succumbed to the Congress demand and

set up the New States Department on 5 July 1947. Providentially enough, the department was placed under Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel for conducting relations with the States on matters of common concern. Little did the Nizam, the Nawabs, the *Maharajas* and the *Rajas* know at that time that the redoubtable Sardar should achieve almost an impossible task of integrating 565 Princely States with the Indian Union in near future by tact and by threat- a feat unparalleled in history and much more significant than the achievement of Bismarck in Germany. In this great work, Patel was ably advised and assisted by Orissa's Harekrushna Mahtab who rejected the concept of 'Representative Government' in the Princely States and advocated the complete amalgamation of the States with the neighbouring provinces.

On the eve of the day of Independence, 15 August 1947, when most of the Princes signed the Instrument of Accession, they were still under an illusion that the Instrument of Accession was like their earlier treaties with the British by which they enjoyed complete internal autonomy while only such subjects as Defence, External Affairs, and Communication were retained by the Centre. But, soon after the Transfer of Power to Indian hands, the next phase opened up in a dramatic suddenness leading to complete merger.

While this brief background deals with an all-India prospective of the situation involving tne British, the Princes, the Congress and the League, it does not deal with the grassroot realities about the role of the oppressed people of the princely States in their struggle for emancipation both from feudal tyranny and imperial hegemony. In this respect, the Feudatory states of

Orissa presented a classic example of what a liberation movement was with or without external influence or support.

The Orissa *Garjats* had a total area of 28,656 sq. miles and a population of nearly five million. The major part of that population was tribal. They were divided into 26 small States, beginning with Mayurbhanj, with an area of 4,243 sq miles having a population of nine lakhs, and ending with Tigiria having an area of 47 sq miles and a population of 24,000. Most of the ruling chiefs of these States were so despotic in their dealing with the subjects, and the latter were so much in destitution that they defy any description of the actual shape or character of the *Garjat* system. The British authorities seldom cared to ascertain as to how did those tiny chiefs manage their affairs in their inaccessible tracts or how did the hill people suffer in their secluded existence. The people were far from political consciousness, education and external impact since most or these States were like prohibited areas to outsiders.

It was among those very people that there occurred rising after rising against the rulers from the beginning of the current century. In the state of Daspalla, in 1913-14, the tribal Khond Rising against the cruel exploitation of the Dewan reached such a point that British forces were immediately requisitioned and a regular massacre was started. 'Nobody could say how many hundreds of men, women and children were killed and what reign of terror was let loose.' The victims were mostly Khonds. There were public hangings, looting and arson. No information about the brutality was allowed to pass outside Daspalla. The agitations in other states like Nilgiri, Talcher and Dhenkanal were seen at

different times till at last in the late 1930s, several of the *Garjat* States were in ferment. (Vide Sidelights on History and Culture of Orissa,*The story of Freedom Movement in Orissa States* by the eminent freedom fighter Dr. Radhanath Rath).

The following papers presented by learned scholars and researchers, dealing with different aspects of the *Garjat* movements at different times, are aimed at highlighting the events and developments which finally culminated in the merger of the States.

2

KISAN MOVEMENT IN THE WIDER CONTEXT OF MERGER

Prahlad Sahoo

The latter half of the thirties witnessed a substantial and systematic awakening of the peasants in the coastal districts of Orissa and its adjoining Tributary States. Led by a group of educated young leaders, the peasants emerged from their long slumber under feudalistic exploitation and bureaucratic repression. The Congress and more particularly the Congress Socialists backed the peasant movement which became part of the ongoing Civil Disobedience Movement. Both in Orissa and the adjoining princely states the same group of leaders worked for the cause of the peasants. Their agitation had its exerted widespread impact on the people of the *Garjats* and the coastal Orissa. It created popular awakening in the princely states which in the long run contributed to the assertion of the democratic rights of those people and their intense desire for merger in the 'New Orissa'.

The basic thrust of the paper is to link the peasant movement in both the units (*Garjats* and Coastal Orissa) which in

the final stage shaped the feeling of the people of the *Garjats* in favour of joining the mainstream of Orissa.

By 1934, the *Utkal Kisan Sangh* was formed with its branches in different parts of the province.[1] Such an awakening was a need of the hour in the background of the economic distress of the Orissan peasants. In a peasant Conference held at Patia on 10.11.37, the leaders emphasised the dialogue as:

> "If the peasants in India could unite they would one day rule the country."[2]

Nabakrushna Choudhury, his wife Malati Devi and a host of others were keen devoted to Kisan affairs in Orissa and in the princely states. They had given a revolutionary programme of the Kisan activities in Orissa. The nature and extent of the peasant agitation can be assessed from the proceedings of the several peasant conferences in Orissa. The seditious writings of Bira Kishore Das in the weekly magazines "*Ranaveri* and *Rana Dunduvi*" awakened the *Garjat* people to stand against the maladministration of their autocratic rulers.[3]

On the 20th and 21st January 1938 there were two meetings at Ananta Pur and Padma Pur in the Balasore District. The speakers for both the meetings were Naba Krushna Choudhury, his wife Malati Devi, Sarangadhar Das, Laxmi Narayan Mishra, Narayan Birbar Samanta and Babaji Jagannath Das. In the two meetings they called upon the people to become

congress members, strengthen the Kisan Movement, fight against the *Zamindars*, give up liquor and remove untouchability. In another meeting on the bed of the river Jira near Baragarh in the Sambalpur district on January 1938, Pran Krushna Padhiary and Malati Choudhury addressed a peasant meeting. Malati Devi began recalling the brave deeds of the salt campaign and the continuing evils of the British Dominion. She asked people to organise meetings in every village and from *Kisan Sabha* to do away with the unjust Tenancy laws.

Kisan Day was observed on 1st September, 1939. There was a mammoth public meeting at Kosal near Angul. It was attended by about five thousand people of whom the majority came from the neighbouring Talcher state.[4] Pandit Pran Krushna Padhiary presided over the meeting. Bhagabati Panigrahi, the other speaker called upon the peasants to realise that they were the real masters of the country; they must oust the British by means of strict non-violent fight. Further he said, in case war brakes out, Indians should not support the British Government that deceived India during the last war with false promises. Pran Krushna Padhiary in his presidential address called upon the people to know that the rulers of the states were the creatures of the British Government who would be exterminated as soon as the British were expelled from the country.[5] The people, he urged, should join the Congress and be firm in their fight against the British. He said that the British were in trouble at the moment and that an opportune time for launching *Satyagraha* had come. He further pointed out that the use of violence for

protecting one's own self was not incompatible with the creed of non-violence.

In the Ganjam district, Banamali Maharana, a stringent and spirited leader of the peasants had mobilised the *Krushaks* of Khallikote and Athagada *Zamindaries.* He was keeping up a consistent agitation for securing for the peasants "passing of the Madras Estates Land Amendment Bill." Maharana with his associate Anant Misra had been organising meetings in many villages in the Kodala Taluq. He had been advising people to enlist themselves as Congress members. In his addresses to the people he had been urging them to be firm, stubborn and defiant against the police acting on behalf of the Khallikote *Zamindar.* His strongly worded booklet, *Raita Bhai* which had created a stir among the people was proscribed on the charge of spreading disaffection against the administration.[6] An attempt was made to organise a *Ryots* conference in Khalikote *Zamindary.* As it failed, another was organised at Shergada by Govind Pradhan and the Conference was presided over by Malati Choudhury, M.L.A.[7] In Kujang of undivided Cuttack district, Narayan Birabar Samant was keeping up a *Krushak* movement. For this purpose, he had formed an association called *The 29 Mouza Sabha*

Phanindranath Pal was a dedicated peasant leader, organiser and revolutionary. He figured prominently in the Sukinda region of the undivided Cuttack district from the days of the Salt *satyagraha* of 1930. In the Sukinda region, he had been

making inflammatory speeches urging people to cut *jungles* and collect fishes as belonging to them. His continuous activity in the cause of peasant interruption to prison terms had become a source of annoyance to the administration.[8] In addition to the Sukinda region, Phanindranath Pal had been stirring up agitation in the Keonjhar State. He had planned an exodus from the Keonjhar state which was abandoned. Phanindranath was religiously devoted to his mission of keeping up the peasant agitation. The ruler of Sukinda was terribly shocked with the activities of Pal through *Krushak Sangha* and his manager to the administration sent a false report stating "The relation between the Land lord and the tenants in the estate was quite satisfactory till recently when *Krushak Sangha* was started here".[9]

In the height of the Kisan Movement in Orissa, Prof. Ranga, a peasant leader of national stature had come to Orissa for addressing a peasant Conference held at Cuttack Town Hall on 26th June, 1938. On that occasion he had observed :

> "This movement has not behind it any constructive genius or the inspiring genius of any man like Mahatma Gandhi or the munificence of a Birla or Bajaj. The only resources they could count upon were the selfless services of a few young comrades in the different parts of the country."

While this observation was quite appropriate and rational, there were a few selfless comrades in Orissa. The peasant movement in

Orissa as a matter of fact possessed collective leadership and collective wisdom. The peasant agitation in Orissa rightly reflected Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru's statement of 12 October, 1933 which was :

> "India's struggle today is part of the great struggle which is going on all over the world for the emancipation of the oppressed. Essentially this is an economic struggle with hunger and want as its driving forces."

The Indian National Congress had excluded the princely states in the scope of its civil disobedience movement as a matter of policy. In Orissa this policy of the Congress could not be observed for the affinity between the people of the two regions. The freedom movement in British territory spilled over into the adjoining princely states. The peasant movement in Orissa had given a fillip to the people agitation in the princely states. The same group of leaders who conducted the peasant movement in Orissa joined with the leaders of the states people against their feudal autocrats. Among the Orissan leaders, Sachi Routray while a student in the Ravenshaw college had accepted the popular agitation in the state of Dhenkanal. This can be illustrated by citing the proceedings of some of the public meetings held in British Orissa. As reported in the Fortnightly Report for the Puri district dated 29.11.38, meetings were held in various places of the district on the state issues. In those

meetings speakers denounced the maladministration and firings in the states of Dhenkanal, Talcher and Athgarh. In one of the important meetings held at Puri on 23.10.38 Mohan Das M.L.A. presided. The meeting was addressed by Pandit Godavaris Misra, Pran Nath Patnaik and other. A resolution was passed condemning the frequent firing and *lathi* charges on unarmed people resulting in a number of deaths. The action of the Government of India in sending troops to Dhenkanal to perpetuate their atrocities was condemned. In the state of Talcher, the agitation had taken a grave turn in the late forties. Deployment of British troops and aerial bombing led to an exodus of about twelve thousand people from that state to the neighbouring British territory of Angul.[10] Referring to this great event, Pabitra Mohan Pradhan, a death defying prominent leader of the state people praised the popular ministry in Orissa for their all possible help to the Talcher refugees in their days of misfortune. He further appealed to the people of the refugee camps to return to their state and carry on the struggle on non-violent principles without fear. He said:

> "The *Raja* could not kill all the people. In case, the popular demands were not conceded by December next, they were bound to revive their mass agitation".

Biswanath Das, the Prime Minister of Orissa expressed his remarks in his tour diary as:

"They speak of terrible oppression. I could not believe that any administration in 20th Century could be so soulless."[12]

Baishnab Charan Patnaik, another frontline leader of the states people addressing the meeting condemned the mentality of *Garjat Rajas* and said that they should abdicate in favour of the popular government. The vernacular weekly paper *Krushak* issued from Cuttack published inflammatory and exciting articles calculated to encourage the people of Dhenkanal to become violent against the *Garjat* ruler.[13] In a meeting at Khurda on 17.10.38, Harekrushna Mahtab informed the public that he had written a long report to Gandhiji requesting him to intervene with the Government of India to set up an impartial committee to enquire into the grievances of the states people.

On 14.10.38 a meeting was held at Siko near Khurda and attended by four hundred people, nearly half of whom were from the Ranpur State. The speakers condemned the recent Ordinance of the Ranpur *Darbar* prohibiting the assembly of more than two persons in the state. An Oriya pamphlet- "Minimum Demands of the Ranpur people" was circulated in the meeting.[14] In another meeting convened by Sarangadhar Das, Secretary of the Orissa State peoples Association at Cuttack on 9th October 1938, Pandit Lingaraj Misra, editor of the Samaj presided. The president and other speakers denounced the oppression committed on the people in the state of Nilgiri and requested the hunger strikers in the jail

to give up their strikes. The tenant agitation in Ranpur took a violent turn from 2nd January 39 following the declaration about the Ranpur *Prajamandal* leaders. Apprehending trouble, the ruler wired the Political Agent for his intervention in the matter.

The agitated people of the state blocked the road leading to Ranpur with logs of timber. The Political Agent Major Bazalgette on receiving the telegram from the *Raja* motored down towards Ranpur. But, went back to Nayagarh as the roads were blocked. He returned with a force from Nayagarh and reached the Ranpur palace clearing the obstruction on the route. While in consultation with the ruler inside the palace, thousands of agitated peasants armed with *lathis* assembled before the palace and shouted that two of the peasants had been killed by the Political Agent on his way to Ranpur. Hearing the uproar of the crowd Major Bazalgette approached the crowd and attempted to reason with them. In the midst of a confusion that ensued, Bazalgette was violently attacked and killed. This took place at about 5 P.M. on 5th January, 1939.

The murder of Bazalgette had deeply hurt Gandhiji who expressed his anguish in the following words :

> "The murder of Major Bazalgette, Political Agent, Orissa States, is most unfortunate and comes as a rude shock. I tender my sympathy to the family of the deceased. I hope the Subedar who accompanied

the deceased will recover from the wounds. The *Prajamandal* is expected to carry on stringent investigation and find out the cause of the murder. It should be a warning to all the workers to be most careful in conducting mass agitation. They should realise that the slightest departure from non-violence is bound to harm the movement for freedom whether in the states or all over India."[15]

It was felt in certain circles of freedom fighters that Bazalgette would not have been killed had the people of Ranpur been explained about *satyagraha* and non-violence.

The people of the Indian States were in a moribund state for ages, suffering from indignities, illegal taxes and beating. The terrible oppression on these people was unbelievable in the twentieth century. The Feudatory States of Orissa were in a chaotic condition. People had no liberty. Agatha Harrison, the British M.P., visiting Orissa states was pained to observe :

"I can see that this whole states question is grave in the extreme."

In this background the peasants and workers in the states and British Orissa were advancing united for a free and New Orissa. The Kisan Movement inspired the people of both the units and created a consciousness not only for freedom from

oppression, but also for a common identity. It depends on the researchers to find new theories and data as to how the Kisan Movement played an important role for the merger of the two Orissas.

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3

REFLECTIONS OF THE INDIAN FREEDOM MOVEMENT ON THE PRINCELY STATES OF ORISSA: (1921-1931)

Prasanna Kumar Mishra

(I)

In the Special Session of the Indian National Congress at Calcutta in September 1920 as well as in December 1920 the boycott of the Government and Aided Educational Institutions was resolved upon. Its effect was evident since December 1920 when the students began to leave their schools and colleges at different places throughout Orissa. The same spirit permeated to the students of the Cuttack Division in January 1921. Jadumani Mangaraj, a student of the 4th year class of the Ravenshaw College, took the lead. He had many friends through whom he had regularly been informed of the situation of the different places. He and some of his staunch supporters and associates namely Narasingh Charan ChowPatnaik, Madhusudan Patnaik, Suresh Chandra Rai, Janendra Nath Das, Naba Kishore Choudhuri, Pitambar Mishra, Guru Charan Jena, Girish Chandra Hota and others joined the non-cooperators and began spreading

(This paper is solely based on original source material - however scanty may be - as available in the Orissa State Archives, Bhubaneswar)

the cult of non-cooperation among the students. The non-cooperators like Gopabandhu Das, President, Utkal Congress Committee, Bhagirathi Mahapatra, Secretary, Utkal Provincial Congress Committee, Gopabandhu Choudhuri, Niranjan Patnaik and others at this period were trying their utmost to induce the boys by their inflammatory speeches to leave the Government schools and colleges and to join the National education at Cuttack and at different places in Orissa. Students of the different places got this information from their friends and also by reading Samaj, a newspaper then published from Satyabadi, and relating principally to non-cooperation movement, their spirit was thus aroused and they invited and sought the advice of the non-cooperators. In pursuance of their request the non-cooperators visited Khurda, Banki, Dhenkanal and Athgarh and preached the creed. There was commotion amongst the students and strikes at schools and colleges in several places. Some of the students joined the *Swaraj Ashram* and National School and began propaganda work and used to learn spinning. The students of Khurda became more violent in January and February 1921 and sent threatening anonymous letters to various Government Officers. In some of these letters the Officers were threatened with death and fire in their houses if they in anyway thwarted the movement and molested the non-cooperating students. In spite of all these efforts of the non-cooperators, many students went back to their colleges and schools and sat for their University examination. Thus, the non-cooperators failed to achieve their desired object.[1]

Still some of the students at Cuttack started a *Sarhat Shop*

where they used to hold secret meetings and discuss matters. Other non-cooperating students used to join them; so also at Khurda the non-cooperating students and the boys of the *Golden Cup* were seen mixing with the non-cooperators and holding secret meetings at a house for their organisation. Jadumani Mangaraj and his selected associates namely Narsing Charan Chow Patnaik, Madhu Sudan Patnaik, Raghunath Mohanti, Alekh Prasad Das and others used to go out to Khurda, Banki, Athgarh, Dhenkanal and other places and started local organisations. The non-cooperators and the paid propagandists also visited these places and delivered inflammatory speeches.[2]

Boys from the princely state of Athgarh were reading at Dhenkanal High School. They had relations and friends at Satyabadi in the district of Puri who were non-cooperators. These boys and other students from correspondence with their friends and by reading the *Samaj* imbibed the spirit of non-cooperation. In February 1921 Krushna Chandra Rath of Athgarh, and brother of Radhanath Rath, Manager of the *Samaj*, ex-student of Dhenkanal High School and a non-cooperating student of Bihar Engineering School, Patna, visited Dhenkanal with two other Bihari students of Patna Engineering School, one of whom was Tej Narayan Singh. They stopped at the Athgarh Students' Mess at Dhenkanal and preached non-cooperation and induced others to leave their studies. Ram Das Babaji, a student of the Dhenkanal Sanskrit Tol and a notorious local non-cooperator joined them. Since then the spirit of non-cooperation amongst the students began to expand. Ram Das Babaji went to Cuttack, enrolled himself as a National Volunteer and met the

leaders there. On his return he mixed with the students more freely and used to take leading part in the meetings held secretly amongst the selected boys of Athgarh and Dhenkanal, namely Kasinath Rath, Lingaraj Mohapatra, Lokanath Das, Rash Bihari Patnaik of Athgarh, Alekh Prasad Das, Bhabagrahi Satapathy, Gatikrushna Tripathi, Gobinda Chandra Mohapatra and Kritibas Pradhan of Dhenkanal. They began organisational work and started collecting *Muthias* and subscriptions. In the meantime Madhusudan Patnaik, a non-cooperating student of Cuttack and a prominent member of the incendiary propaganda and a close associate of Jadumani Mangaraj and Janendra Nath Das visited the Feudatory States to preach non-cooperation.[3]

By the time Ram Das Babaji proceeded far in the movement with the students. On 26 February 1921 at 3 A.M. the Baramba Mess at Dhenkanal was partially burnt. On 7 March 1921 during *Sivaratri* festival, students of Dhenkanal School went to *Siva* temple at Kapilas where some non-cooperators from Cuttack came and joined Ram Das Babaji. They preached non-cooperation there and delivered speeches. The students collected subscriptions from the pilgrims for the *Swaraj* Fund. The spirit of the movement rose high among the students of Dhenkanal after this meeting. They succeeded in destroying the teachers' quarters and the Athgarh Mess on 20 March 1921. After this incident these boys were much more emboldened and began to hold open meetings in which Ram Das Babaji was the principal speaker. The latter induced the students to go out on strike on 14 April 1921. Consequently the roll of the students in the school was reduced from 214 to 73. The students of Dhenkanal invited the

non-cooperators like Madhusudan Patnaik, Niranjan Patnaik, Raj Krushna Bose and Krushna Chandra Rai who came to Dhenkanal and spoke in the meetings. Ram Das Babaji had started by this time an *Ashram* in Dhenkanal and accommodated most of the hostel boys there. From these students a few joined the *Swaraj Ashram* at Cuttack and were engaged in propaganda. Ram Das Babaji was the organiser of the movement in Dhenkanal and invited the students of the Dhenkanal School which led to incendiarism there. He was also partially responsible for the incendiarism in the Feudatory State of Athgarh, but he was arrested on 4 November 1921 under section 108 C.P.C. and went to jail for one year.[4]

In February 1921 the spirit of non-cooperation was fully developed amongst the students of Athgarh School. Harihar Mohapatra and Jagannath Mohapatra of Satyabadi in Puri district used to read at Athgarh School and lived at the Students Mess there. They used to get information there from their Satyabadi friends regarding the non-cooperation movement and ventilated the same to other students. The students here also used to read Samaj and mixed with Ram Das Babaji of Dhenkanal and Madhusudan Patnaik, a non-cooperating student of Cuttack who used to visit Athgarh and preached non-cooperation to them. The leaders among the students at Athgarh were Sadananda Tripathy, Kasinath Mishra, Ram Krushna Patnaik, Chandra Sekhar Tripathy and Nilakantha Rath. Sadananda Tripathy and Nilakantha Rath were able to excite the feeling of some students of Athgarh, who grew more excited and started collecting money for the *Swaraj* funds and held several meetings. Kasinath Rath, a non-cooperating

student of the Dhenkanal School spoke in some of the meetings and induced the students to leave their studies and to join the movement. Nilakanth Rath and Sadananda Tripathy both joined the movement and began propaganda work. The former joined the movement at Banki and latter remained at Khurda under the leadership of Narashing Charan ChowPatnaik. Sadananda used to visit Banki and used to help Nilakantha and other non-cooperators of the place. He had very violent spirit.[5]

In May 1921 the Headmaster of Dhenkanal School took much repressive measures against the students in consequence of which there was no strike in the school. But some students left the school by taking transfer and some left their studies and joined the movement. During the *Puja* holidays in October 1921, the boys of Athgarh, ex-students of Dhenkanal and Athgarh Schools namely Lingaraj Mohapatra, Lokanath Das, Rash Bihari Patnaik, Ex-student of Dhenkanal School, Ram Krishana Patnaik, Kasinath Mishra, ex-students of Athgarh School reading at the Banki School came to their homes at Athgarh. Non-cooperator Sadannda Tripathy was also at Athgarh. They were mixing with each other and on 16 October 1921 the Athgarh School house was completely destroyed by fire. A student named Radhasham Dhir of Athgarh School was found involved in the above incident. He was a tool at the hands of the students and Sadananda Tripathy. It is therefore clear that the principal and the original moving force was the spirit of non-cooperation amongst the students. There is also no doubt that there were evidences of connection between Cuttack, Khurda, Banki and the Feudatory States. It is impossible to obtain any evidence from the outsiders in face of

the fact that the people had sympathy with the non-cooperators and the movements. The non-cooperating students also could not be induced to divulge the secret.[6]

(II)

After the Gandhi-Irwin Agreement some of the local employees of the Congress party in Orissa seemed to have lost their jobs and that was possibly the reason why a few of them made their way into the Feudatory States. Two Satyagrahis came to the feudatory state of Daspalla in order to collect money but they did not indulge in propaganda work. In Bamara there was a serious trouble. The Congress people started a campaign for non-payment of rent, which was particularly strong in the Kuchinda sub-division and in which the *Agharia gaontias* had been taking a prominent part. They had been objecting to the last settlement which was in force for two years, and had been using the present shortage of money as the occasion to further the agitation. Every consideration was shown in genuine cases of inability to pay the dues. It is an undoubted fact that in some cases the *gaontias* so far from collecting the rent, which was their duty, were instructing the *raiyats* not to pay. The properties of the six ring leading *gaontias* were attached but could not be sold in auction. Those gaontias were arrested and detained in the open custody of the Nazir. On enquiry it was found that the *gaontias* had no intention whatever of paying their dues and hence they were ordered to be detained as civil prisoners in the civil jail. The procedure of distraint and imprisonment in the civil jail was in accordance with the Public Demands Recovery Rules of the State.[7]

Numerous false and inflammatory statements were published in the newspapers like the *Prajatantra*, the *Asha* and the *Samaj* alleging, for instance, that anyone in *Khaddar* was being arrested and the Superintendent had passed orders for the *gaontias* to be whipped and their women folk outraged in their presence if they failed to pay rent. A dismissed school master of Bamara and a Congress worker had been imprisoned under Section 188 IPC for disobedience of an order. Trouble was further fomented at meetings there and elsewhere, particularly in Sambalpur. The present movement in the Feudatory States, especially in Bamara, was largely engineered in Rairakhol which adjoined Bamara and in various other states. In Boudh also trouble was seen over the new settlement which had encouraged the outsiders to invite the states people. The States Authority apprehended that the Congress workers who had lost their jobs in British districts were looking for a new sphere of operation in the states.[8]

Several reflections were cast on general conditions in the Feudatory States. As for example, the *Prajatantra* on 27 March 1931 published that the Superintendent of Police had become more impatient and accordingly passed orders to whip these *gaontias* and molest their female-folk in their presence, if they failed to pay the rent. The *Deshkatha* on 4 May 1931 made a suggestion that tenants should represent their grievances to Congress as the only possible way of getting help. Very serious reflections were cast on the administration of the ruling chief of

Boudh. The editor of the Deshakatha was warned for his violent attacks on Government servants.[9]

The editorial in the *Deshakatha* on 4 May 1931 revealed the following:

"The inhuman oppression that happens in *Garjats* is not apt to come outside, but from what we have come to know by chance we can safely say that about three-fourths of the total population of Orissa are helpless. The state of affairs in all *garjats* excepting 2 to 3 is the same. There are *bethi*, assault, highhandedness, illegal exaction and enhancement of rent everywhere. Still it is a pity that the tenants do not get any opportunity to represent their grievance before anybody. These things surely do not throw credit on the work of the Political Agent. If the Political Agent does not make any confidential enquiry out of his own motion the actual state of things will suddenly burst forth in way of revolution ...... the origin of the grievances is not being enquired into ..... The tenants are helpless. They cannot join the National Congress. So it is the duty of the Provincial Congress Committee to provide some remedy in as much as the political improvement of Orissa is impossible without the Feudatory States. Can the Political Agent say why there is so much emigration from the States?......... There is heart-rending disappointment everywhere. In the meantime we have heard of terrible oppressions in at least 7 states and we cannot find means how to console the tenants ...... Let the tenants represent their grievances before the Congress being regardless of the consequences. This is the only possible way of getting help in future".[10]

A correspondent under the pseudonym of the States described the condition of the States as follows:

"The tenants of the State (Boudh) have been confined on account of their inability to pay rent; but the chief has selected this time for his pilgrimage. .... The tenants have been overburdened with excessive rent, but even then there is no end to their troubles ..... The tenants have also become sufficiently vexed of beating ..... that money is used instead of *bansi* in Boudh, most probably (as) means, to have the chief procures, women for enjoyment ..... as it is a habit with the people of the *Garjats* not to complain before anybody one of the teachers has left service and another is midway between custody and bail".[11]

"The sufferings of the tenants can be easily imagined from the fact that they have to traverse a distance of 70 to 80 miles at their own cost for the hunting excursion of the chief. ..... there is also *bethi* rendered to the relative of the Chief (i.e. Lal Saheb of Kharial) ..... The village school teachers have not got any pay for the last 3 months on account of shortage of funds in treasury, but wherefrom has the money for pilgrimage come? ..... The search light of public opinion will never fall on these dark kingdom. ..... The tenants of Feudatory States have no place in the National Congress. So we request our British Orissa brethren to enquire into our condition through the Congress. We do not want that the powers exercised by Chiefs should be curtailed. There should only be some check to their disposition".[12]

It appeared that the newspaper intended to continue these attacks on the administration of the Feudatory States. The

Government of Orissa stopped the circulation of this paper.

During the last few months in 1931 there had been considerable agitation against the administration of the Orissa Feudatory States by the Congress workers and this agitation was fomented by articles appearing in newspapers published in Orissa. The agitation was at first concentrated on the state of Bamra of which the ruling chief was a minor and which was therefore under the direct administratation of the British. As these attacks referred to in the newspapers relating to a state under administration the Governor in Council was reluctant to take action under the Indian States (Protection against Disaffected) Act, which was designed chiefly to protect the chiefs from personal attacks but directed the local officers to keep a close watch on these papers.[13] As the newspaper *Deshakatha* attacked the ruling chief of Boudh, so also the *Samaj* contained allegation against the chief of Dhenkanal. The purport of the allegation was as follows :

"Owing to the *zoolum* of *bethi* the tenants of the Dhenkanal State are greatly harassed and oppressed, that in connection with the marriage of the *Pattayat Saheb* they are forced to supply wood, bamboos etc. and to work without remuneration, that recently thousands of men were compelled to assist in the catching of elephants and they had no time to take their meals, that Re. 1-1-0 is realised on each bag of rice exported from the State, that peons and jamadars oppress and exact money from the tenants, that even those who work on *bethi* are fined and the *bethias* of Mandaba Sahi have been fined Rs.10 each, that the

tenants who are unable to pay the rent owing to fall in the price of paddy are harassed and their lands sold by auction at a small price ..... that if no steps are taken betimes the tenants will die or there will be great disorder in the State".[14]

The *Prajatantra* made a similar attack on the administration of Keonjhar and on the ruling chiefs in general which go like this :

"The realisation of 12 annas revenue is in full swing in the Anandpur Sub-division. As there is no sale of paddy the people are unable to pay the revenue. Those who are ready to pay are required to pay interest 3 pice per rupee and so they are unable to pay up ....." "In realising revenue the people are being brutally assaulted and filthily abused. The gentlemen of the village are being accused as ring leaders and are being insulted by petty peons. The women also are not free from assault and abuses. If such oppression continues how are the tenants to live here ? ..... With the realisation of land revenue another calamity has come upon the tenants. The *Raja* has brought teak plants from foreign lands and is transplanting them near his jungles. The tenants of Anandpur are being required to render *Bethi* in connection with this work. Now this is the time for cultivation, and the people have become desperate for want of rain. They are not being exempted from *Bethi* even for a day and those that object to render *Bethi* are being assaulted."[15]

"As the aforesaid two oppressions exceeded their bounds the people in despair under the signature of 500 tenants have submitted an application to the Sub-Divisional Officer of

Anandpur, it is stated in the application that if these oppressions are not stopped the tenants would leave their houses and go away".

"..... that Krushna Babu was imprisoned for two months and was fined Rs.50/- for not paying revenue to Raghunath Bhuyan. The Dewan has honourably acquitted him. This amply proves to what extent native officers are true to their salt".[16]

As regards condition in the Feudatory States of Orissa as a whole the *Prajatantra* on 23 June 1931 published the following:

"Here come the peons and the police of the *Rajah*. Whatever the position and caste of a man may be they will enter into his house, beat him, drag him out and take him by the Pig-tail to work on *bethi* (without remuneration)".

"Now the *Rajah* wants a *shikar*-whether for the *Rajah* himself or for some friend of his - the tenants are beaten and taken to the *shikar*. No matter if in the *shikar* the tenant is shot and killed, or if he is trampled to death by elephant or suffer the pangs of utter starvation".

"Then an information is received of the where- abouts of a beautiful woman. She is forcibly abducted for satisfying the abominable passion of some one, and for this end the commission of every possible sin is permissible".

"The State Treasury is exhausted on prostitutes, wine and motor cars. Let there be mourning in the State, let the tenants heave deep sighs of distress but they will have to pay subscription for the *Rajah's nautch party* (of prostitutes)".[17]

".....That such things are happening daily in Orissa *Garjats* the very God of Shame will shut his ears, the body will shiver and the heart will beat wildly. Inhuman oppression is prevalent in almost every *Garjat State*".

".....Then what is the remedy ? The only remedy is to awaken the tenants. Men are needed to form an organisation of the tenants to unite them and prepare them to lay down their lives for preservation of their self-respect and maintenance of their rights. There may not be many, even a few would be able to solve once for all the problem of the Orissa *Garjats*. If you are asked to work on *bethi*, say "No, we wont", even if you are beaten, even at the risk of your life stick to the same "No, we won't", that will give the oppressor something new to rack his brains about. He will realise that a mighty force is working against him, he will pit his own strength against it and be defeated in the long run, and *Bethi* system will be abolished from the *Garjats*. This is the means to achieve it. Let the *Garjat* people be prepared for this, it cannot be achieved all at once, ... It is good at the very outset to get rid of the idea that - outsiders will make everything plain - sailing for you no one can save you if you cannot survive in this world by the strength of your own arms. At the present moment spiritual strength has supplanted physical strength and is showing a new way to the world. That spiritual strength consists of courage and self-sacrifice. Let the *Garjat* people practise these two virtues they will be delivered from all oppressions in no time".[18]

As has been seen, the agitation against the states by

means of newspaper propaganda was extending and intensifying and there was reason to believe that the agitations were attempting to extort money by this means from the states with a view to the next meeting of the All India Congress which would be held in Orissa. Agitation among the aboriginal population of the states might have the most serious consequences and it was for this reason that it would be more necessary to stop this newspaper agitation. The paper in question had a bad record. As it was published in Balasore, the Superintendent of Police of the District might be authorised to file a complaint in the Court of the District Magistrate. Similarly the *Raja* of Dhenkanal issued order for prohibition of the circulation of the newspapers like the *Samaj* and the *Asha* in his territory. He observed that the circulation of the above two news papers in his State was gradually affecting the mentality of the student community prejudicially and creating an undesirable spirit among them. These papers often published incorrect and prevented news about the affairs in his State. Therefore, he directed that no subject of the State should retain any copy of the papers in his possession. Any issue of these papers found should be confiscated and the possessor would be liable to prosecution under Section 188 I.P.C. Still some boys and people of the town of Dhenkanal were in the habit of buying the proscribed papers at the local railway station and destroyed them after reading. The ruler felt, obviously, his order had become a dead letter.[19]

As an aftermath all such activities were set as a prelude to the *Prajamandal* Movement in the princely states of Orissa in 1938.

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4

A REFLECTION ON THE CONTEMPORARY REALITIES IN THE PRINCELY STATES OF ORISSA

Dandapani Behera

There were as many as 26 princely states before independence. They were backward in comparison with British Orissa. The most appaling economic condition prevailed in almost all the states where the people lived under alarmingly sub-human condition and abysmal and grinding poverty just like animals.[1]

Just like British Orissa, agriculture predominated the economy of the Princely Orissa. But unlike the British Orissa, the Princely Orissa had no rule of law, no revenue and tenancy laws in any form or manner and their people simply were left to their fate or in the hands of their rulers to be subjected to unspeakable suffering and untold and unimaginable hardship and torture. The rent was fixed in most arbitrary manners and which was collected very highhandedly without taking the ability and resources of the tenants into any consideration. For no reasons and on flimsy pretexts and pleas the resistant tenants were evicted

of their long possessions enjoyed over generations at the sheer whims and caprices of the rulers. No relief, no concession, no remission or suspension of rent was provided to the cultivators or tenants even during the time of drought, loss of crops and famine. No natural calamity was taken into account while collecting rent. Non-payment of rent or falling into rent arrears simply amounted to the takeover of the land by the state to be resold to the highest bidder.[2]

Nothing tangible was done for improving the quality of the land and its cultivation. No new technique or scientification was applied to agriculture for improving productivity of the land for yielding better kinds of crops. The princes bothered least about this and showed no interest at all for bringing about any sort of progress in the field of agricluture. On the other hand they went on collecting rent whether there were crops or no crops most arbitrarily and high handedly by even enhancing the rent as when they were pleased to. They took least care of the peasants and the people even when horrible famines and all such natural calamities broke out. They remained totally apathetic and unsympathetic to the growing economic hardships and maladies of the people remaining under their autocratic and tyrannical rule and administration. To add fuel to the fire, they even increased their revenue by further exploiting the tenants rather than by improving the quality of agriculture or making productive investment in it. The ignorance and helplessness of the peasants in particular and the people in general were taken advantage of by the rulers for collecting most unheard of extorted rent taxes and feudal dues to richly fill in the coffers of the rulers. In the

process, the princes and their feudal lords and underlings rolled in luxuries and masses were left to grope in the darkness of exploitation, extortion and tyranny and thereby undergoing the pangs of economic sufferings and agonies, parallels of which are hardly heard or seen elsewhere in the British Orissa.[3]

The feudatory rulers enjoyed extensive autonomy in the matters of revenue, judicial and police administration in their respective states without least interference from the British paramount authority. Under such circumstances, they kept their subjects under their total control and behaved with them as pleased to. The Orissa States Enquiry Committee bitterly criticised and condemned the insecurity of tenure, arbitrary increase in rent, and the unscrupulous exploitation being perpetrates by the princes in their famous Report of 1939.

The land was heavily taxed without taking its yielding capacity to account. In this connection R.K. Ramdhyani has aptly remarked that : "Settlements were in fact regarded as merely a means to augment the revenue and the method adopted was of little importance so long as this purpose was served."[4] And thus, the land rent was arbitrarily settled in favour of the princes without providing least tenancy security to the peasants. Such a situation let loose a reign of economic exploitation and terror by the princes among their peasants and the people in general. The Orissa States Enquiry Committee rightly observed in their Report stating that : "In a poverty stricken area which has no other sources of income except land, this heavy and *iniquitous* burden has broken the backs of the peasantry and created conditions ripe for an agrarian revolution, a very mild type of which has already

manifested itself in several states in Orissa."[5]

The economic condition of the people was decidedly backward. There prevailed abysmal poverty and total destitution among the people particularly among the peasants. The factors like stagnation and deterioration of agriculture, utter neglect of industrialisation, the heavy taxation, exploitation of the people by the rulers, their underlings, the *mahajanas* or moneylenders, intense conservatism, lack of education and wide spread illiteracy among the people, absence of means of communication etc. contributed to the growth and perpetuation of economic distress of the people.

The British policy of indifference to the affairs of the princely states went in favour of the princes rather protecting the interests of the people. Such a policy proved to be detrimental to the welfare of the people. Economic discontent was the contributing factor of people's uprisings in the States. Although the British despatched military forces for suppressing the popular risings, they never made any real probe into the deplorable economic condition of the people. [5]

Utkal Dipika, dated March 10, 1894, observed that : "The managers keep the kings (*Rajas*) in good humour, show them some profit and wring the necks of the subjects. When the subjects complain, their voices vanish into the air. The Superintendent and his Assistants visit the rural areas every year, but they never try to ascertain the attitude of the subjects towards administration. They return with content seeing the outside beauty of the villages. This is the root cause of all evils."[6]

The economic good of the people was possible if there was good rainfall which brought about good crops. The Superintendent of Tributary Mahals observed : "The prosperity of the people depends on a measure on weather and crops, when the rainfall is copious and evenly balanced, and people reap good harvest and are contented, when the contrary is the case of the pinch of poverty is widespread." This was very true in cases of the states like Athgarh, Dhenkanal, Pal-Lahara, Nilgiri, Keonjhar, Mayurbhanja, Hindol, Rampur, Talcher, Tigiria, Baramba, Narasinghpur, Athmallik, Boudh, Daspalla, Khandpara and Nayagarh.[7]

The peasants borrowed money from the moneylenders whenever they were forced to meet the ruler's demand for more taxes, at higher rate of interest. In the process, they were deeply engrossed in indebtedness which passed on to their succeeding generation to remain so in future as well. It was more true in cases of the tribals.

It is aptly said that : "The *Mahajanas* who hold the *debttors*' lands, exact a high rate of interest. In many cases stamped deeds are executed and ryots depend on so much on the *Mahajans* that the amount of the debt and the condition of repayment are left blank in the deed. The ryots sign it and taking the paddy return home, being contented with their bargain. It is surprising to see what a large number of unsuspecting ryots get into the clutches of the exacting *Mahajans* by this means".

"The ignorant borrowers cannot recover posession of their lands until the principal is paid and the lands in most cases

become the *prosperity* of the mortgages. The indebtedness of the agricultural population is a great obstacle to the improvement of their economic condition".

It is rightly observed that : "On the whole, the material condition of the people of the Orissa States was more backward than that of the British Orissa. The over-assessment of the land revenue, the illegal exactions of the *Rajas*, exploitation of the *Raja's amalas* and almost complete absence of the efforts of the most princes to improve the material condition of the people were responsible for this. Most people were on the verge of starvation. The recurrence of short harvests or partial failure of crops, caused immense privation among the poor classes who were however saved from severe distress by their habit of making use of jungle roots, fruits and leaves. The aboriginal tribes as a rule lived on these jungle products for six months every year".[8]

The system of taxation fell heavily on the peasants. There were also a large feudal dues which were collected most cruelly from the people. In addition to these, several kinds of cesses were collected to fill in the coffers, which were illegal, and were arbitrarily collected without taking the paying capacity of the payer into consideration. The arbitrary exaction of manifold cesses embittered the relation between the princes and the people. Coercive methods were always used in the matters of collecting such cesses which largely contributed towards the outbreak of popular uprisings in the Feudatory States.[9]

The tenants were mainly harassed and exploited through the traditional coercive methods without paying any regard to the

universal principles of justice and fairness to reinvigorate the different methods of revenue administration.

Several feudal practices were in vogue in all the states such as the *Bethi, Goti, Magana, Rasads. Abwabs.* etc., from time immemorial. *Bethi* was in force in all the States. There were several kinds of *Bethis* such as *Rath Bethi. Sadak Bethi, Rajbati* or *Nahara* (palace) *Bethi*, and *Shikar Bethi.* The *Rath Bethi* was rendering of free service by the peasants for construction of the *Rath* or the Car of Lord Jagannath during the Car Festival. The *Sadak Bethi* was rendering of free service for months for construction of public roads, tanks, reservoirs and public buildings. The *Nahar Bethi* was rendering of free service by the people in the construction and repair works of the royal palace. The *Shikar Bethi* was accompanying the rulers in the hunting expeditions of the royal hunters without taking any wages. The system of such *Bethis* brought about unspeakable sufferings to the peasants and the common people. The master was not obliged to pay for such labour.[10] R.K. Ramdhyani rightly remarked that : "Labour is dirt- cheap in this country, and to insist upon free or unpaid labours is the height of callousness.[11]

The States Enquiry Committee commented on the system stating : "The amount of time lost by the peasants in doing *Bethi* is staggering. A peasant spends over one hundred days of the year in doing forced labour for the states or its officials. He is liable to be called up on at any time of the day or night. He must leave his own work, however, urgent it may be, on pain of being beaten, fined, or even imprisoned. If it is harvest season, the crops must wait. If it is sowing season, the sowing must be

postponed till he returns after performing the labour forced on him. Moreover, the peasants are at the back and call of the minor officials of the State who make them do their private jobs. Of all the exactions under which the peasant is suffering, *bethi* is the most oppressive. It keeps him in grinding poverty. What is worse, it prevents his emergence from a state of serfdom. It might have served a social purpose in the days of feudalism hundred of years ago when the peasant did labour for his lord in return for protection and other rights. But to-day it enables the Ruler and his officials to grab what otherwise they cannot afford to pay for. It is an invisible addition to the Privy Purse of the Ruler. It has become an engine of ruthless oppression.'[2]

The Ruler and his underlings enjoyed rights to engage the peasants and the poor in any work without paying anything to them, and even the latter were not given any cooking time. Such an oppressive *Bethi* system had given rise to the popular rising in 1891 in the State of Keonjhar.

In addition to this *Bethi* system, there were other oppressive methods of exaction of labour and taxes from the people, which were called *Magans*, *Rasads* and *Abwabs*. *Magan* was a levy collected from the people on the occasions of all royal ceremonies of the ruler and the royal family. The *Rasad* was a levy collected from the tenants in kind for the government officials visiting the State. *Abwabs* were the gifts and presents offered to the royal household on the occasions of feasts and festivities by the peasants. *Bagari* was rendering service for carrying luggage of the *Raja* and his officials. Taxes were also levied on the forests and on all forest products. The producer of

the lac was not paid more than his labour charges. This was also the same in case of Kendu leaf collectors who were not paid more than their labour charges. All the profits of the forest trade went squarely in favour of the princes, but not in the interests of the forest tribals who always regarded forests as their home and the source of subsistence.[13]

Such exorbitant taxation, illegal levies, forced labour and the arbitrary and highhanded methods of collecting taxes and labour made the lives of the toiling masses almost unbearable from time to time. In the process, the poor became poorer and the privileged richer. Under such economically explosive situations popular uprisings broke out in several states like Nayagarh, Keonjhar, Mayurbhanja, Boudh, Bamara, Rairangpur, Ranpur, Nilgiri, Kalahandi, Talcher, Daspalla and Dhenkanal.[14]

In addition to the aforesaid taxes, there were other kinds of taxes collected from the people to make the state treasury overflow with coins. These were the grazing fees, fees for killing wild animals damaging the crops, fees for using forest trees for arranging and keeping goats and buffalos for sacrificial purposes, and the river ferring fees, etc. The modes of collecting these taxes not only economically ruined the people but also heightened their sufferings and manifold agonies.

The deprivation of tribal rights in the forests made them to revolt against the rulers and their underlings to reassert their lost rights. Even the tribals participated in the popular uprisings protesting against their economic exploitation by the *Rajas* and their men. Many of the states contained sizeable tribal

populations in them. Such states included Keonjhar, Nayagarh, Kalahandi, Gangapur, Mayurbhanja, Angul and Boudh. The aboriginal tribals were extremely simple, upright, brave, and freedom loving stock of people. Traditionally they were agriculturists. They were subjected to all kinds of extortion and misrule in the hands of the rulers and their underlings like the nontribal population. Traditionally they were rent free subjects. But now they were subjected to the payment of rent and taxes in some states like Nayagarh and Keonjhar. Even in some states like Mayurbhanja, Nayagarh and Keonjhar taxes were imposed for the use of forest products by the tribals. When they found their traditional rights, privileges and the way of life were badly affected by the maladministration of the princes, the tribals rose in revolt against their rulers who were exploiting their land, labour, forests and hill tracts, in violation of their traditional rights over them. They were now required to pay certain dues and taxes quite contrary to the age-old customs. In consequence of all these, powerful resentments were mounted up in almost all Garajats among the tribals against their *Rajas*. They were still a primitive community of people being devoid of settled means of subsistences. Such tribal revolts would not have at all possible had their economic ills were duly remedied and timely warded off.[16]

The Socio-politic economic conditions of the princely states all through the colonial Paramount rule, remained at the lowest ebb on account of continuously heavily taxed land revenue, arbitrary extortion of illegal cesses, dues, and taxes, the most inhuman exaction of forced labour from the peasants and the

people in many ways, and the prevalence of maladministration perpetrated by the rulers and their underlings. This occurred also on account of the lack of education literacy, smouldering ignorance and the grinding poverty of the masses, deplorable agrarian retrogress, industrial stagnation and non-prevalence of the means of communications in the states. The widespread economic distress and indignation let lose rebellions and revolts in some states like in Bamanghati in 1866, Keonjhar in 1867 and in 1891-93 and Nayagarh in 1893-94. Although such sporadic disturbances were heavily put down with the British police assistance, the spirit of resistance continued to lurk among the people for long till 24 of the 26 states were merged with the linguistic province of Orissa in 1948-49. The Report of the Orissa States Enquiry Committee of 1938 headed by Harekrushna Mahtab and the Report of 1941 of R.K. Ramdhyani of the Indian Civil Service were eloquent enough about the continued socio-economic hazards and maladies as prevailed in the princely states stemming out of the maladministration which provided enough spark to ignite people movements all through the historical times for urging liberation from the age-old feudal shackles of slavery and the bondage of foreign imperial rule.

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5

STATES' PEOPLES' CONFERENCE: THE AGENT OF POLITICAL MOBILISATION IN THE PRINCELY STATES

Bijaya Chandra Rath

It was during the period of the First World War that the declaration of the British Government was made promising the right of self-determination to the Indian people. Soon after Gandhiji emerged in the political firmament of India and provided the necessary momentum to the freedom movement. This development had its natural impact on the people of the Indian States, who began to feel restive. Local organisations started coming into existence. Organisations like *Sourashtra Seva Samiti, Rajsthan Sewa Sangh, Deccan States' Peoples' Conference and Congress, Praja Parishads* and *Praja Mandals* in different States were established after Gandhiji had begun to take active part in politics and tried to transfer the venue of the Congress activities from classes to masses.[1] Non-Co-operation movement of Mahatmaji was responsible for the boycott of government service, legal practice and colleges by many youngmen even in the States, and it was these enthusiastic non-cooperators coming from the States, who deliberated in different

places and thought of creating an organisation for the peoples of the States.[2]

THE ALL INDIA STATES' PEOPLES' CONFERENCE:

In the beginning the States' peoples' conferences were held at the time of the annual sessions of Indian National Congress and anybody present there could be enrolled as a "delegate" from the State announced to be his own.[3] This practice, however, continued for a short period. By then a thinking process had started in the minds of some leading political workers, concerned with the States' problems, for establishing a central organisation to champion the cause of the States' people. The actual initiative to organize the States' peoples' movement was made in 1927 when the Indian States' peoples' conference was convened at Bombay.[4] A liberal politician, Ram Chandra Rao, the Ex-Dewan of Mysore, presided over the conference. Eventually those who assembled resolved to establish a permanent organisation for the Indian States' peoples to be styled as "Indian States' peoples conference", with its head quarters in Bombay.[5] The chief aim of this conference was decided to be "the attainment of the responsible government for the people of Indian States through representative institutions under the aegis of their rulers."[6] The Conference passed as many as 15 resolutions, the prominent among them being related to the establishment of responsible government, the granting of civil liberties etc., and demanding for "a speedy attainment of *Swaraj* for India as a whole, the States should be brought into constitutional relations with British India and the people of the States should be assigned a definite place and an effective voice

in all matters of common concern in any new constitution that may be devised for the whole of India."[7]

The Bombay conference was organised mainly by the workers of Gujrat, Kathiawar, members of 'Servants of India Society' and other intellectuals from Poona and Deccan States and a few others.[8] The leaders, who had taken active part in organising the conference, included Amrit Lal Seth, P.L. Chudgar, Balwantrai Mehta, Prof. Abhayankar, Thakkar Bapa, Manilal Kothari, Mani Shankar Trivedi, Dr. Sumant Meheta and others. Delegates from 17 prominent States participated in the Conference.

The south Indian States had at that time their own 'Conference' and south Indian States' workers and politicians were also attempting to have a political organisation on an all India basis.[9] They had organised "All India States' subjects' Conference" at Madras on the 26th and 27th of December, 1927, just ten days after the Bombay conference. It was apparent that there was lack of contact between these two regions for which two different organisations came into being for the same purpose. Satyamurthi was the Chairman of the Reception Committee at the Madras Conference, which declared that *Swaraj* or full responsible government "is the goal to be attained in all Indian States", and asked the people "to streneously work for the same by all legislative and peaceful means."[10]

These two organisations continued to function separately upto 1931, despite the fact that they both strove for the same goal. In 1931, at the Karachi session of the Indian National

Congress, however, representatives of different groups met Mahatma Gandhi and a decision was taken for holding a joint meeting of both the conferences at Baroda. But the proposal did not materialise. The All India States' subjects' Conference did not function after that and allowed the Bombay organisation to work as an all India body.[11] Leaders like Satyamurthi and K.T. Bhashyam, played leading roles in establishing that there was only one All India Organisation for the States' people in the country.

The All India States' Peoples' Conference could not organise annual sessions and met once in two years or even later. Leaders like Ram Chandra Rao, C.Y. Chintamani, Ramananda Chatterjee, N.C. Kelkar, K. Natrajan etc., were chosen as the Presidents of the Conference. In 1936 a prominent Congress leader, Dr.Pattabhi Sitaramayya, presided over the Conference, who was succeeded by Jawaharlal Nehru at the Ludhiana session in 1939. Pandit Nehru was also re-elected President in 1945 and presided over the Udaipur session of the Conference, the first of its kind organised in an Indian States. Seikh Muhammad Abdullah was the first Indian State leader who was elected as the President of the Conference for the session held in Gwalior in 1947. But, because of his incarceration in Kashmir jail, he could not preside over the session in person. In his absence Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya presided upto the 30th September 1947, when Seikh Abdullah was released.

From the very outset, the All India State's Peoples' Conference (A.I.S.P.C.) had to contend with severe odds. The publicity and the propaganda campaign for educating public

opinion and mobilising the people was carried on from the press and platforms outside the States' territories. As a matter of fact it was impossible for the States' people to speed up its activities in the States at that time.[12] It was because of the hostile attitude of the rulers that all the meetings of the A.I.S.P.C. were held outside the States till 1945 (Udaipur session). On the other hand, the British Government had consistently refused to recognise the competence of this body to take up the cause of the States' people.

The Congress attitude towards the Indian States' Peoples' Conference was ambivalent despite the fact that the conference from its very inception had been sending deputations to the annual session of the National Congress. Though the Congress expressed its sympathy for and support to the struggle of the States' people for the attainment of full responsible government, at the same time as an organisation the Congress did not allow itself to be actively involved in their movement. The official Congress policy of "Non-interference" in the internal affairs of the Indian States was influenced by Gandhiji. It was only at the Tripuri session of the Indian National Congress in 1939 a decision was taken to the effect then that the congress committee would meet the AISPC to find out ways and means for bringing a closer co-operation among the people of the British India and the Indian States.

In the mean time the AISPC organised the sixth session at Ludhiana under the Presidentship of Jawaharlal Nehru from the 15th to 17th, February 1939. The AISPC resolved that "in view of the development of the struggle and the Congress policy in

regard to it, the time has come when the struggle should be co-ordinated with the wider struggle for Indian independence of which it is an integral part. Such an integrated all India struggle necessarily be carried on under the guidance of the Congress and this conference pledges its loyal co-operation in it"[13] Thus the Tripuri resolution bridged the gulf between the Indian National Congress and the AISPC and led to a gradual identification of the AISPC with the Congress.[14]

Dr. Pattabhi was the only President who took keen interest in the mobilisation of the people in the states. He undertook extensive tours in different states organising state congress and *Prajamandals*. He visited Jodhpur just after Karachi conference and later on toured Deccan States, Mysore and Travancore and mobilised the people there. Pandit Nehru, succeeding Dr. Pattabhi in 1939, provided a further fillip to the States' peoples' movement. But apart from giving temporary guidance from outside Nehru could not contribute much to the organisational progress in the beginning as he was most of the time in jail upto the middle of 1945.

ORISSA STATES' PEOPLES' CONFERENCE :

In the third session of the AISPC which was held at Bombay from 9 to 11, June 1931, under the presidentship of Ramananda Chatterjee, three persons represented Orissa. Laxmi Narayan Sahu of *Bharat Sevak Samiti* and Sarat Chandra Das of Mayurbhanj State participated in it as delegates and Bipin Bihari Choudhury of Cuttack attended the conference as an observer.[15] During this period of Civil Disobedience Movement, the British

Orissa witnessed a new birth of national life. But this spirit could not be contained within the four walls of the British Districts, its reverberations were also heard within the States' boundaries. The unhappy conditions of the States' people necessitated the mobilisation of the masses for obtaining the minimum civil and political rights. In such circumstances the Orissa States' Peoples' conference (OSPC) was first organised in 1931 at Cuttack with the active cooperation of the AISPC and with the help of a handful of workers of Orissa States and the help and Co-operation of some level headed public men of Orissa.[16] Notable leaders of the States like Radha Nath Rath, Balukeswar Acharya, Madhusudan Patnaik and Govind Chandra Mishra convened the first meeting on 20 June 1931 at Cuttack, which was presided over by Bhubananda Das, an eminent legislator of Orissa. The cooperation of the rulers was sought, who however refused to recognise it and on the contrary attempts were made to nip it in the bud. [17] Representatives from different States participated in this Conference. A working Committee was formed with Braja Sundar Das as the President and Balukeswar Acharya as the Secretary and Treasurer.[18] A number of resolutions were passed. The aim of the conference was proclaimed to be the welfare of the States with close cooperation of the people and the rulers. [19] The rulers were requested to look to the all round development of education, health, agriculture, trade and industry in the States. A plea was made for the abolition of the obnoxious *bethi* and *begar* system from the States.

But after the first conference the Organisation became dormant and then sank into a state of inactivity.[20] As the freedom

struggle gathered momentum and there was hectic political activity in India, no national leader was available to guide the Orissa States' Peoples' conference and so this Organisation could not make any progress.[21] Even though in 1934 an attempt was made for a session of the OSPC, it could not be held because of the non-availability of any front-ranking political leader.[22]

The elections to the Orissa Legislative Assembly were held in January 1937. During the election campaign and afterwards, innumerable mass meetings were organised in Orissa by Congress and *Krushak Sangh* workers, all under the auspices of the Congress. The people from almost all the States bordering the districts attended these meetings, believing in the early stages that "the Congress Government is their Government also and whispering to one another that Mahatma Gandhi must save them also."[23] But none the less the message of the Congress and the power of the votes quickly penetrated into the interior of the States.[24] The common people felt that the time had come, when they should also organise themselves to fight for their just and legitimate rights and to replace the feudal form of Government that had been imposed on them by responsible Government.

About the same period Sarangadhar Das of Dhenkanal State and some others attempted at revitalizing the organisation of the States' people. The second session of the Orissa States' Peoples' conference was held, six years after, on 23 and 24 June 1937 at Cuttack. Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya, the President of the AISPC, presided over it. Only about one hundred people from eight States out of twenty-six attended.[25] Many interested persons were unable to attend the conference because of the

preventive measures taken by the State administrations. However, wide publicity was given to the conference in the Press, and some of the mal-practices and instances of gross-injustice prevailing in the States were highlighted. Balukeswar Acharya was the Chairman of the Reception Committee in the second session of the OSPC at Cuttack. In his address Acharya said that the aim of the conference was to establish social relationship among the subjects of the different Orissan States, to bring out cooperation in the field of education, industry and administration among them, to put-forth the grievances of the people before the rulers by mobilising public opinion.[26] Dr. Pattabhi in his Presidential address exhorted the people of the States to get themselves mingled with the national mainstream alongwith their fellow-brethren across the boundary. He emphasized the need for educating and mobilizing the States' people for the national cause and to harness the immense latent power of the masses in the States.[27]

Not only a number of resolutions, giving vent to the grievances of the people of the States, were passed but also a constitution was adopted for the OSPC in this conference. The first resolution of the conference deplored the absence of codified laws and acts in the States and demanded that the laws should be published for general reference. The conference also urged upon the rules of the Orissa States to immediately confer upon their subjects (a) the rights of occupancy on their holdings and (b) fundamental rights of citizenship.[28] The conference further drew the attention of the rulers to the evil practices of extracting *Rasad*, *Magan* and *Bheti* and strongly pleaded for their abolition.

An emphatic protest was recorded against the continuance of the practice of double extortion in the shape of permanent additional taxation over and above the usual forms of *Begar* and the rulers were urged to abolish every form of *Bethi* either in the shape of labour or of a money levy or both.[29]

For investigating the illegalities, excesses and acts of repression in most of the States of Orissa and to prepare a report on them, the conference appointed a committee of inquiry. The committee was composed of Satish Chandra Bose, Braja Sundar Das and Balvantrai Mehta (Secretary, AISPC) with Sarangadhar Das (Secretary, OSPC) as the convener.

In another resolution the conference made a number of demands for better administration of the States. An immediate introduction of responsible government was demanded. The annual budget of the States, the conference demanded, were to be passed by majority of elected members in the Legislative Councils. The amount of the Privy-purse of the Ruling Chief and his family was to be fixed by the Legislature. Proper audit of the accounts of the States were to be made. A plea was made for the independence of judiciary and its separation from the Executive. The intervention of the rulers in the judicial administration was to cease. The recruitment to the state services was to be made according to the definite laws and rules.

In one of the resolutions the conference declared itself unable to accept the federation proposed in the Government of India Act of 1935. The object of the Conference was declared to secure the attainment of responsible Government, fundamental

rights of citizenship and direct representation of the people in the Central legislature; as also to work towards the advance of their administrative, economic, educational and social condition, by all peaceful and legitimate means.[30]

All bonafide residents of Orissa States above the age of 18, who subscribed to the object of the conference and paid an annual subscription of one *anna*, were eligible for membership.

The conference represented organisations like (1) a) The Orissa States' Peoples' conference b) the working committee of the conference and (2) Associations of the people of the States of Orissa. As regards the formation of local branches, any five or more qualified members were entitled to form themselves into a Primary Committee, and any such primary Committee, on application to the Working Committee of the Conference, might be recognised by it.

The Working Committee of the conference consisted of President, Secretary, Treasurer and eight other members elected by the conference. The following personnel of the Working Committee were then elected.[31]

President	-	Dr. B. Pattabhi Sitaramayya
Secretary	-	Sarangadhar Das (Dhenkanal)
Treasurer	-	Dr. Biswambhar Rath (Nayagarh)
Members :	-	Lalmohan Pati (Mayurbhanj)
		Balukeswar Acharya (Hindol)
		Radha Nath Rath (Athgarh)
		Harmohan Patanaik (Dhenkanal)

Govinda Chandra Mishra (Daspalla)
Madhusudan Mohanty (Athgarh)
Madhusudan Patanaik (Tigiria)
Gangadhar Mishra (Ranpur)

The permanent office of the working committee was located at Cuttack. The Secretary remained in entire charge of the conference and was responsible to the working committee. The conference had also resolved to affiliate itself to the AISPC.

Thus the conference and its resolutions were really impositions from above by the old hands living outside the states.[32] The issue of the questionnaire on behalf of the inquiry committee in December 1937 was practically the beginning of the mass mobilisation in the States.[33] The thinking process of the people of the States started in this direction while giving replies to the questionnaire. Replies to the questionnaire came in but usually with the request that the names of the signatories were to be kept confidential, the fear of the *Raja* and his machinery was so great.[34]

In the meantime the Inquiry Committee had been reconstituted. Satish Chandra Bose, one of the members, could not join the Committee owing to domestic reasons.[35] Braja Sundar Das, another member, was prevented by illness from participating in the work of the Committee.[36] The working committee of the Orissa States' Peoples' Conference, in its meeting on 6 June 1938 reconstituted the committee. It consisted of (1) H.K. Mahtab, member, Working Committee of the AICC, (2) Lalmohan Patanaik, Secretary, Orissa Christian Education

Board and (3) Balvantrai Mehta, Member, Servants of the Peoples Society. H.K. Mahtab was elected Chairman of the Committee on 20 June 1938. This Committee of Inquiry visited various places in Cuttack, Sambalpur and Puri Districts. People from several states in large numbers met the Committee to tender evidence and they were no longer afraid of their names being made public. Mahtab had also written to all the ruling chiefs of Orissa seeking their help and cooperation for the inquiry, but no one except Patna State did care to send any reply.[37]

Sarangadhar Das was the Secretary of the Orissa States' Peoples' Conference and though new to politics, was the elder statesman of the movement in the Princely States. He was a sugar technologist, who got his education in Japan and America and who had dreamt of laying the Industrial Foundation of Orissa. But unfortunately he became the victim of the ruler's whims and lost his sugar farm, machinery and every thing in Dhenkanal. He was a non-socialist democrat, but was associated with the Socialists because of their feeling and involvement in the States' Peoples' cause. When the movement broke out, all its secretarial burden fell on him. He had the distnction of becoming the member of the Standing Committee of the AISPC, Secretary of AISPC and the President of the Orissa and C.P. Regional council set-up by the AISPC.

CONCLUSION :

The process of mobilisation in the states was set in motion after the emergence of Gandhiji in the national political scene. His call for Non-Co-operation was having its impact on

the educated youth in the states. A two pronged attack was made, it was directed not only against the British Imperialism but also against the States' administration.

It was the AISPC which had taken up the task of mobilisation in the States. The covert support and sympathy of the Congress men went a long way in educating the Public Opinion. Further, with the installation of the Congress ministries in the Provinces in 1937, the States' Peoples' Organisation was emboldened and an added momentum was provided to the process of mobilisation in the States. A number of States witnessed a large scale mass upsurge.

As the agency of mobilisation, the OSPC aimed at securing the development of the States' People. When the Inquiry Committee set up by the OSPC visited different places, the people of the states had a unique experience in tendering evidence before it. A common ground for their future struggle emerged from the story of their sufferings and grievances, as narrated by them. It aroused immense expectations in them. And that resulted in the formation of the *Prajamandals* in different states of Orissa to lead and mobilise the people for the redress of the grievances.

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6

THE GANDHIAN TUNE IN MAYURBHANJ

SubhashChandra Mishra

Mayurbhanj was the largest of the Feudatory States of the erstwhile Bihar and Orissa province. It had a total area of 4,425 square miles and a population of 8.89 lacs (1931 census).[1] Known for the forest resources and minerals its people were lucky to be administered by an English educated enlightened Chief, Maharaja Sri Ram Chandra Bhanj Deo from 1892 to 1912. The excellent rapport of Mayurbhanj and the British administration during this period, saw the commencement of the Mayurbhanj State Council, the State Light Railway, the Municipality and liberal reforms in the field of education, public welfare etc. The absence of such spectacular reforms elsewhere in the Feudatory States of Orissa, as in Mayurbhanj, made the Mayurbhanj administration more adorable. The people of Mayurbhanj justly basked in the glory of Sri Ram Chandra and continue to do so even to-day.

After the sudden and premature demise of Sri Ram Chandra Bhanj Deo, Purna Chandra continued the line of Anglicised administration. Due to his personal contributions during the First World War, he was honoured by the British.[2] His

brother Pratap Chandra Bhanj Deo succeeded Purna Chandra in April 1928 and witnessed the turn in the tides in Mayurbhanj till its merger in January 1949.

The rise of the Congress, the emergence of the Mahatma had little to do with the affairs of Mayurbhanj. Even the non-cooperation movement had no visible impact there. The steadily growing organised resistance in some of the Feudatory States of Orissa, took a turn after the murder of Bazelgatee, the Political Agent, at Ranpur. It's after this that the wind of *Prajamandal* started blowing slowly in Mayurbhanj.

It is quite possible that *Maharaja* Pratap Chandra could smell the *Prajamandal* rising in some Feudatory States and advanced the proposal for formation of *Praja Sabhas* in Mayurbhanj, in 1938. The Mayurbhanj *State Gazette* dated 22 January 1939 contained the election rules and the list of 248 constituencies for the five *Praja Sabhas* of Mayurbhanj as per the *Praja Sabha* order of 1938. The elections were held and the results declared in May 1939.[3]

The *Maharaja* of Mayurbhanj issued a significant message which reflects his observations on the *Praja Sabha* elections : "I have watched with interest the first elections under the Mayurbhanj *Praja Sabha* Order, 1938, which have just been concluded. Representative bodies like *Praja Sabhas* are altogether an innovation in Mayurbhanj, and the first elections, naturally caused some amount of bewilderment among the people, inspite of the efforts made to explain the object with which I desired the creation of the *Sabhas*..... An important experiment is

being launched today towards an adjustment, on modern constitutional lines, on the traditional mutual relations of my administration and my people, and in the new sphere of public activity that is being opened, there will be much need for caution and circumspection, much will have to be learnt by gradual experience and many pitfalls will have to be avoided, in order that the experiment may not prove a failure. I would ask my people to remember that peaceful progress can be hoped to be achieved on the new path they are about to tread, only if their chosen representatives, actuated by a true service and honesty of purpose, proceed with patience and a sense of realities, and feel a genuine pride in being citizens of Mayurbhanj".[4] The first meeting of the *Praja Sabha* was held in August 1939.[5]

Parallel to the efforts of the Maharaja, the *Prajamandal* was ushering in Mayurbhanj. Early in 1939, a meeting was organised in Dhanapana village (in Khunta area of Kaptipada Sub-division). Sarat chandra Das explained the Congress idea in that meeting. This encouraged Sarat Das to organise a Public meeting near his village Ambjora, on 26 March 1939. This meeting attended by the representatives of the *Pragana Samitis* resolved to intensify the movement for a people's government in Mayurbhanj.

Inspite of the *Praja Sabhas* of the *Maharaja*, the *Prajamandal* moved ahead spreading the Congress message of *Ahimsa, Charkha* and Gandhi in Mayurbhanj. One may notice in the songs played rhythmically in Mayurbhanj in those days, a clear indication of efforts to sift the idea of glorification of the *Bhanjaland* with the new message of *Ahimsa* as an ideal path of

sacrifice for Motherland. The following song *Bhanja Prachi Sangita* emphasised action on the *Mahatma's* principles without delay :

> Delay no more.
> Strive ahead.
> The whole country *Bharata* has awakened.
> If you don't wake up
> It will be a blot
> On our Motherland (*Bhanjaland*).
> ....
> With the strength of Truth
> And through *Ahimsa*
> Make limitless sacrifice
> In the interest of the nation.[6]

The "Marching Song" (*Marching Sangita)* clearly describes how the *Praja Sabha* offer of the *Maharaja* was initially welcomed by the people. This composition significantly pointed out that the *Bhanja land* is a part of Mother India and that the harmony between the *Maharaja* and his subjects should be sustained.

> Abandon the distinction of caste,
> The distinction of the Aryans and the non-Aryans,
> The disputes in the villages,
> The intoxication of wealth,
> And blow the pitch of war music so high
> So that the fear of death may be chased far away.
> And that very resonance may enter

The hills and the forests
And the mountain springs,
The skies above
And the heathers below
And sing "Victory to the Mother"
To the hearts of
The sun, the moon and the stars.
Come hey ! the youth and the old alike,
Come all with the war drums,
And sing the glory of the *Bhanja land*
And the songs of Mother India.
In the New Age of New Spirits of Democracy
Destroy the Public grievances
By the government of the representatives
Under the care of Sri Pratap Chandra.
This is the most auspicious moment
Hearken O ! The Conches blowing !
Let the king and the subjects
Be happy to live
In the harmony they now exhibit.
And Ramchandra may shower his blessings from the heaven!

There were many compositions which explained the Gandhian concepts on prohibition and the *Charkha*. *Swabalambanashila Sangita* and *Atmanirbharashila gita* were two songs glorifying the Charkha.

The latter said :
"Following the *Mahatma's* advice

Supply the *Charkha* to the poor
Weave yourselves, don't while away your time
Then the door to Liberation shall be opened".

And the former composition criticized those who did not adore the *Mahatma's* words.

Nishanibarana Sangita (Song for Prohibition) explained the bad effects of liquor addiction.

Nari Jagarana Sangita (The song of Women Awakening) invoked the women saying that Gandhiji has been imprisoned for endeavouring to save Mother India who is the Mother of all the women as well.

The *Jagrata Sangita* (The song of Awakening) even referred to freedom from foreign rule. :

"To-day my India has awakened.
Gladly tread the path of Ahimsa
To be liberated from the foreign yoke."

This song explained that India has never been greedy or imperialistic. Neither it has the army of Japan nor it preferred to shake hands with Hitler or Mussolini. It's saint [Mahatma Gandhi] has shown the path of bliss by indoctrinating all in the principle of *Ahimsa*.

Another song : *Mahatma Sangita* eulogised the *Mahatma* for his message of peace, liberation and progress *sans* violence. It referred to his penance in the prison cell, his dream of *Ram-rajya* and said that the World shall remember his call for Truth

and Peace. And further,

"When the *Feringhi* were relaxing
The farmers and the labour alike
Responded to your brave call
By raising a cry
That the Red Fort is not far off.
And the pride of cruel Churchill was demolished."

The *Gandhi Sangita* (Song of Gandhi) was quite forthright in up-hailing Gandhiji and his ideas. It appealed all to :

Sing in chorus
Victory to Gandhi
Victory to Gandhi
Mahatma Mohan Das
Who lives in Dwaraka
Who is dark complexioned,
His only aim is *Swaraj*
For the liberation of *Mother India.*
Pray Lord Jagannath
And sing in Chorus
Victory to Gandhi.
Mother India is imprisoned
In the temple of *Mother India.*
Be not scared
If thou art to liberate
Thy Mother.

Sing in Chorus
Victory to Gandhi
Victory to Gandhi.

While the *Prajamandal* activities in Mayurbhanj were steadily gaining ground, the *Maharaja* intelligently granted concessions to his subjects bewitching the emerging leadership sitting on the fence. Mayurbhanj could no longer be kept as a dry upland zone from being washed by the showers of the Gandhian ideas. Those who were enthused by the call of the *Mahatma* went on playing the Gandhian tune to refresh and awaken the people in the villages located amidst the serenity of the hills in Mayurbhanj.

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(A) **ଭଂଜ ପ୍ରୀତି ସଙ୍ଗୀତ**

ବିଳମ୍ବ ନ କର ହୁଅ ଅଗ୍ରସର
ଜାଗିଲାଣି ସାରା ଭାରତ ଦେଶ ହେ ।
ଯେବେ ନ ଉଠିବ କଳଙ୍କ ରଟିବ
ଆମ୍ଭ ଜନ୍ମଭୂମି ର ଅପଯଶ ହେ ।୧୧।

.....

ସତ୍ୟବଳ ଧରି ଅହିଂସା ଆଚରି
ସାଧ ରାଜ୍ୟ ହିତେ ତ୍ୟାଗ ଅପାର ହେ ।୧୨।

(B) **ମାର୍ଚିଂ ସଙ୍ଗୀତ**

ଆର୍ଯ୍ୟ କି ଅନାର୍ଯ୍ୟ ଜାତି ଭେଦାଭେଦ
ଗ୍ରାମ୍ୟ ଦଳାଦଳି ତେଜି ଧନମଦ
ବଜାଇଣ ଭେରି ଉଠେ ପଳାଉ ମୃତ୍ୟୁ ଭୟ ହେ ।୧୨।
ପ୍ରବେଶି ସେ ଧ୍ୱନି ପର୍ବତ କାନନ
ଆକାଶ ପାତାଳ ଗିରି ପ୍ରସବଣ
ରବି ଶଶି ତାରାପାଶେ ଗାଉ ଜନନୀ ଜୟ ହେ ।୧୩।
ଆସ ହେ ଯୁବକ ଆସ ଆସ ବୃଦ୍ଧ

ଆସ ହେ ସକଳେ ଧରି ବୀର ବାଦ୍ୟ

ଭକ୍ତଭୂମି ଜନ୍ମଗାଥା ଭାରତ ଜୟ ଗାନ ହେ ।୧୪।

ଶ୍ରୀ ପ୍ରତାପ ଚନ୍ଦ୍ର ବାହୁଛାୟା ତଳେ

ନବଯୁଗ ଭାବ ଗଣତନ୍ତ୍ର ମୂଳେ

ନାଶ ପ୍ରଜା ଦୁଃଖ ଗଢି ପ୍ରତିନିଧି ଶାସନ ହେ ।୧୫।

ଏ ମାହେନ୍ଦ୍ର ବେଳା ଶୁଭେ ଶଙ୍ଖ ସ୍ୱନ

ରାଜାପ୍ରଜା ମେଳ ଉଭେ କରୁ ଧନ୍ୟ

ଦେବ ରାମଚନ୍ଦ୍ର ସ୍ୱର୍ଗୁଁ ବରଷୁ ସୁଧାବାରି ହେ ।୧୬।

(C) ଜାଗ୍ରତ ସଙ୍ଗୀତ

ଆଜି ଭାରତ ମୋହର ଜାଗ୍ରତ

ଅହିଂସା ପଥରେ ତାଲ୍ହ ହର୍ଷଭରେ

ବିଦେଶୀ ବନ୍ଧନ ମୁକ୍ତ ।୦।

....

(D) ## ମହାତ୍ମା ସଙ୍ଗୀତ

....

ତବ ତୂର୍ଯ୍ୟନାଦ ଶୁଣି ଚାଷି ମଜଦୁର ହେ

ଡାକଦେଲେ ଲାଇକିଲା ନାହିଁ ବେଶି ଦୂର ହେ ।

ଚଙ୍କାସନେ ଠେକାଭିଡି ବସିଥିଲା ଫିରିଙ୍ଗି

ନିରିମମ ଚରଟିଲ ଗରବ ଗଲା ଭାଙ୍ଗି

ତେରଶ ପଚାଷ ସାଲେ ଫୁଟେ ରକ୍ତ ମନ୍ଦାର ।୨।

(E) ## ଗାନ୍ଧି ସଙ୍ଗୀତ

ଗାଅ ଗାନ୍ଧି ଜୟ

ଗାଅ-ଜୟ ଜୟ, ବୋଲି ବଦନ ଭରି

ଗାଅ ଗାଅ ହେ, ଗାଅ ଗାନ୍ଧି ଜୟ ।୦।

ଜୟ ଗାନ୍ଧି ଜୟ ଗାନ୍ଧି ବୋଲି

ନାଚରେ ଭାଇ ବାହୁ ତୁଳିରେ

ପ୍ରେମେଦେଇ ତାଳି ନାଚ ଢ଼ଳି

ଗାଇ ଜୟ ଜୟ ହେ ।୧।

ମହାତ୍ମା ମୋହନ ଦାସ

ଦ୍ୱାରକାପୁରରେ ବାସ ହେ

ଦ୍ୱାପର ଦ୍ୱାରକା ଦିପ

କୃଷ୍ଣ କଳା ମୟ ହେ ।୨।

ଭାରତ ମାତା ଉଦ୍ଧାର

ସ୍ୱରାଜ ପ୍ରାପତି ସାର ହେ

ଜଗତ କରତା ଜଗନ୍ନାଥେ କରଇୟ ହେ ।୩।

ଭାରତ ମାତା ମନ୍ଦିରେ

ଭାରତ ମାତା ବନ୍ଦିରେ

ମା'କୁ ମୁକୁଳାଇବୁ ତୁ ଯଦି

ଡର ନାହିଁ ଭୟ ହେ ।୪।

7

NATIONALIST POLITICS AND POPULAR STRUGGLES IN THE PRINCELY STATES: RE-THINKING NILGIRI STATE (1937-39)

Chandi Prasad Nanda

The basic objective of this paper is to examine as to how the National Movement influenced the popular movements in the Princely states (*Garjats*) of Orissa. And for obvious reasons, the present piece does not intend to deal with the socio-political structures characterising the different princely states of Orissa nor with the relative sense of economic, political and social deprivations which the people in the states suffered in comparison to the people in the British Orissa tract.[1]

In the first section of this essay, we will try to briefly examine the nature and extent of the appeal which the National movement, and more particularly the Civil Disobedience Movement made to the people in the princely states. In the second section, we will dwell upon the developments in Nilgiri State till 1939 specifically focusing on the equation between

national movement and nationalist leadership on the one hand and popular politics in the state on the other.

I

During April, 1931, the Political Agent and Commissioner of Orissa Feudatory States remarked rather contemptuously.[2]

"After the Gandhi - Irwin Agreement some of the local employees of the Congress Party seem to have lost their jobs, and this is possibly the reason why a few of them seem to have made their way into the states."

Detailing various activities of the *Satyagrahis*, he went on to note: "...two *Satyagrahis* came to the state (Daspalla) in order to collect money but that he (ruling chief) was able to see them off... In Bamra (state) there has been more serious trouble... The Congress people have started a campaign for non-payment of rent, which is particularly strong in the Kuchinda sub-division and in which *Agharia gaontias* have been taking a prominent part. They have been objecting to the last settlement (in force for last two years) and have been using the present shortage of money as the occasion to further the agitation... It is an understood fact that in some cases, the *gaontias*, so far from collecting the rent, which is their duty, are instructing the *raiyats* not to pay. The properties of the six ring-leading *gaontias* were therefore attached but attempts to sell these at auction were frustrated. The six ring-leaders were accordingly arrested... A dismissed school master of the Bamara State and Congress workers has been imprisoned... for disobedience to an order of a public servant and 3 outsiders have been removed from the state..."

However, he concluded by noting that" as soon as the *Agharia gaontias* find that their action...treated as a grave breach of loyalty to the State, which is one of the condition on which they hold their posts, the movement will die down... These incidents occuring for the first time in these States seem to indicate... that the congress workers who are losing their jobs in British are now working for a new sphere of action."

The above report, in many ways, points to the impact of Civil Disobedience Movement on the princely states where popular discentent was pervasive. More particularly, it is not worthy that the initial attempts for organising state subjects were undertaken by the nationalist leadership after Gandhi-Irwin Pact of 1931.

In other words, the Congress activists, and the *Satyagrahis* of British Orissa increasingly moved into the Princely pockets to impart a distinct thrust to popular discontent in the course of the more organised Gandhian Movement of Civil Disobedience of 1930-31. Moreover, with an elevated notion of *Swaraj* spreading at popular levels, particularly after the Pact, the feeling against the oppressive socio-political structures existing in the states assumed a sharper focus. The *Anti-Raja* resentment in the shape of a no-rent movement by the peasants in Bamara needs to be understood in this light.

We come across several instances of popular protest in the princely states in Orissa in the context of national movement. In this connection, the impetus given due to the campaign of nationalist press was in fact, momentous. Here, we will briefly examine the nature of the Press campaign.

For example, the *Prajatentra* wrote :

"It is remarked that the S.P. has become more impatient and passed orders to whip these *gaontias* and molest their female folk in their presence, if they fail to pay the rent."[3]

The *Desakatha* in one of its editorial commented :[4]

"The inhuman oppression that happens in *Garjat* is not apt to come outside... we can safely say that about three-fourth of the total population of Orissa are helpless. The State of affairs in all *garjats* excepting 2 or 3 is the same. There are *bethi*,assault,high handedness,illegal exactions and enhancement of rent everywhere still it is a pity that tenants do not get an opportunity to represent their grievances before anybody...The tenants are helpless. They can not join the National Congress. So it is the duty of the PCC to provide for some remedy in as much as political improvement of Orissa is impossible without feudatory states. Can the political agent-say why there is so much emigration from the-States?....In the meantime, we have heard of terrible oppressions in at least 7 States and we can not find means how to console the tenants..."

The editorial went on to quote the news of Boudh State, sent by a correspondent under the pseudonym *Garjat*.

"...The Feudatory Chief of Boudh has gone on pilgrimage with about hundred persons... with the intention of getting a son....The tenants of the State have been confined on account of their inability to pay rent, but the Chief has selected his time for his pilgrimage.... The tenants have been overburdened with excessive rent, but even then there is no end to their troubles... Formerly, Harbhagha was the centre of hunting excursion of the

Chief of Boudh. Consequently the residents of the place have become accustomed to beating : but recently the centre has been shifted to Manmunda and as a result of that the residents of Harbhagha are being dragged to a distance of 70 to 80 miles for beating purpose... The incidents of the *Dwapar* age very often happen here, but by means of money instead of *bansi* (flute) [meaning thereby, the Chief Procures women for enjoyment with the help of money]. A few days ago there was a search about 2-3 places in order to ascertain the name of the correspondent to *Desakatha* and one was also severely assaulted; but the fact has not come in as much as it is a habit with the people of the *Garjats* not to complain...One of the teachers has left services and another is mid way between custody and bail... The sufferings of the tenants can be easily imagined from the fact that they have to traverse a distance of 70 to 80 miles at their own cost for the hunting excursion of the chief... The village school teachers have not got any pay for the last 3 months on account of shortage of funds in treasury but where from has the money for pilgrimage come? The search light of public opinion will never fall on these dark kingdoms. It is not possible for one Political Agent to look to so many *Garjats*. How is then remedy possible? The tenants of feudatory states have no place in the National Congress. So we request our British Orissa brethren to enquire into our condition, through the Congress. We do not want that the powers exercised by the Chiefs should be curtailed. There should be some check to their disposition."

This report while indicating the nature of popular expectation existing in the states also suggests the attempt at

forging linkages with the ongoing struggle for *Swaraj* with the objective of redressing the popular grievances of the States. It is necessary to point out here that the peasants in Boudh had been opposing the land settlement enforced around 1929 which enhanced the land revenue by 400%.[5]

Similarly, voicing the cause of the peasants of Dhenkanal State, the Samaja wrote:[6]

"... owing to the *zoolum* of *bethi* the tenants of Dhenkanal state are greatly harassed and oppressed... They are forced to supply bamboo and wood, to work without remuneration... thousands of men are compelled to assist in catching the elephants and they had no time to take their meals... Re 1-1-0 is realised in each bag of rice exported from the state... that the tenants who are unable to pay the rent owing to fall in the price of paddy are harassed and their lands sold by auction at a small price..."

Further, reporting about Keonjhar State, the *Prajatantra* in an article titled 'The oppression in Keonjhar': tenants ready to leave their houses'[7] pointed out, "The realisation of 12 annas revenue is in full swing in the Anandpur sub-division. As there is no sale of paddy, the people are unable to pay the revenue. Those who are ready to pay are required to pay interest 3 pice per rupee and so they are unable to pay up... In realising revenue people are brutally assaulted and filthily abused... The women also are not free from assault and abuse... The gentlemen of the village are being accused as ring-leaders and are being insulted by petty peons. If such oppression continues how are the tenants

to live here?... The tenants of Anandpur are being required to render *bethi* in connection with the transplantation of teak plants, brought by the *Raja* from foreign lands, near his jungles. Now this is time for cultivation and people have become desperate for want of rain... People are not exempted from *bethi* even for a day and those that object to render *bethi* are being assaulted... So, as the two oppressions exceeded their bounds, 500 tenants have submitted an application to the S.D.O. of Anandpur and demanded that if the oppressions are not stopped, the tenants would leave their houses and go away".

Yet in another article the Prajatantra reflecting over sordid tales of the princely states recounted, "Here come the peons and police of the Raja. Whatever the position and caste of a man may be, they will enter into the house, beat him, drag him out and take him by Pig-tail to work a *bethi* without remuneration. Now the *Raja* wants *shikar* for himself or for some of his friends - the tenants are beaten, taken to *shikar.* It does not matter, if in the *shikar*, the tenant is shot and killed or trampled to death by elephant or suffer death due to starvation... An information reaches the *Raja* about a beautiful woman. She is forcibly abducted for satisfying the lecherous craze of the Raja and any possible sin can be committed to do it.

The State Treasury is exhausted on prostitutes, wine and motor cars... tenants will have to pay subscription for *Raja's* dancing party of prostitutes. If these news reach Europe and other countries they will call the reporter a lier saying that such oppression is not possible in 20th century. But at the news that

such things are happening daily in our Orissa *Garjat*, the very god of shame will shut his ears..."

Around July, an official report admitted that,[9] "During the last few months, there has been considerable agitation against the administration of the Orissa states by Congress workers and this agitation has been fomented by articles appearing in news papers published in Orissa. It went on to add that, "agitation against the states by means of news paper propaganda is extending and intensifying.. Agitation among aboriginal population of the states may have the most serious consequences and it is for this reason... to stop this newspaper agitation".

It was in this context, the Dhenkanal State issued an order during April banning the circulation of the *Samaja* and *Asha* alleging that such newspapers were gradually affecting; "the mentality of students community prejudicially and creating an undesirable spirit among them"[10]. But, the popular reaction was sharper. The ruler of Dhenkanal, to his utter dismay found that school boys and town people were assembling at Railway station to buy the newspapers, proscribed in his state. In this connection, the authorities contemplated issuing order to the schools to keep "the railway station out of bounds when the train comes in"[11] By May, 1932, the authorities had ordered that all copies of the *Prajatantra, Asha* and the *Desakatha* be seized and destroyed from all the states.[12]

Thus, the feudal oppression underlying the social structure of the princely States came under the increasing attack of the national movement which swept the pockets of British

India beyond the borders of the States. A contemporary status quoist newspaper, the *New Orissa*, made this fact sharply clear when it observed :

"Living so close as they do with the people in British Orissa, the States people could not but be profoundly influenced by the rapid march of political events across their frontiers. Unfortunately, the political awakening of the States people has been rather rude, for which both the Rulers and their political *gurus* in British India are equally responsible".[13]

It further went on to maintain that "though the Congress organisation has refused to lend its countenance to the peoples movement in the State... Yet the States have been undoubtedly set in motion by Congresmen in Orissa at the instance of a few disgruntled States subjects like Sarangadhar Das".[14]

(II)

The initial impulse for peoples organisation against the autocratic feudal chief of Nilgiri dates back to 1928 when over one thousand tenants left the state for Balasore protesting against the systems of *sikar* and *bethi* of the state. They were however, persuaded to return to the state with intervention of the noted Gandhian, C.F. Andrews and an assurance was obtained from the ruler to follow a policy of restraint regarding the above system.[15]

Afterwards, under the heat of Civil Disobedience Movement, a *Yuvak Sangha* was formed in 1931. The activities of the Sangha angered the ruler, who convicted a few of its activists. Under the banner of this *Sangha*, a virtual, 'underground' movement co-existed with Civil Disobedience

Movement. The *Yuvak Sangha* had taken up programmes like Harijan uplift and literacy campaign, which points to the impact of Gandhian constructive and reform activities. The *Sangha* also used to organise a common dinner during which both high and low castes ate together and the ration for the common dinner was contributed by the villagers. This feast naturally ensured a gathering and discussion on different themes ranging from the national movement to the ruler's administration. The political orientation of this practice became overt with congress activists openly sharing the feast around 1937; and the ruler proceeded against Hadibandhu Raj and others for spreading the Harijan uplift movement on the ground of "violation of ancient customs and usages" (which was punishable by the State')![16] The *Sangha* was revived in May, 1938, fired by the imagination of some of the activists, who had gone to attend the States Peoples Conference (held in Cuttack in February, 1938). Further, the installation of Congress Ministry had really inflated their hope of a similar change in the State itself.[17] In a meeting at Ayodhya (1 May, 1938 a group of leaders like Hadibandhu Raj, Maheswar Pradhan, Pranabandhu Agasti and Banamali Das (the first three being involved earlier in the *Sangha* right since Civil Disobedience Movement and thus convicted; the 4th, a student activist, doing his matriculation) spoke to a gathering of 200 and announced the formation of *Yuvak Sangha.*[18]

The meeting essentially preached the cult of the Congress and resolved to send out volunteers to villages in the state to carry on propaganda. The demands it stressed were, mainly, (1) popular control of state budget, (2) reduction of land revenue, (3)

right to cut timber from the state forests, (4) introduction of prohibition in the state.[19]

In fact, behind the reorganisation of the *Sangha*, the moral and ideological support of the local intelligentsia and the rural rich, apart from the support of the Congress activists of the Orissa Province and particularly Balasore district (being the border district of Nilgiri State), was crucial. For instance, the leading sympathisers of the *Sangha* at the initial stage were Kailash Chandra Mohanty, (B.A.- B.L., a pleader) and his brother Sarat Mohanty, (a *Mukhtear* of Balasore), U.N. Birbar (Matriculate, a *zamindar*, relative of the ruler), Sadhu Prasad. Bidyadhar Mohapatra (*Sarbarakar* of Patapur village), Surendra Chaudhury (*Sarbarakar*), Chintamani Behera (*Sarbarakar* of Alsuan village) etc.[20] The very nature of leadership at least suggests that it was the petty landlord, village headmen, and Ruler's officials, who volunteered to lead popular mobilisation against the ruler. In response to the developments, the ruler served an order enjoining prior approval of the administration for organising a meeting or demonstration to be sought through an application on a stamped paper; and banned the hawking of *Krushak* newspaper in the state (considered to be the ideological inspiration for popular organisation).[21] The move only redoubled the popular resolve to defy the Ruler's promulgation. The headquarters of the *Sangha* was shifted to Alasuan (in Soro P.S.). In an apparent move to curb popular mobilisation, Pranabandhu Agasti, Giridhari Panda (Cuttack) and Chaitan Misra (Daspalla) were arrested for delivering "seditious" speeches vis-a-vis the state on 23 May.[22] This was followed by the incident when

nearly 200 people joined a procession and marched to the jail to congratulate the arrested leaders for their bold stand against the Ruler. The processionists carried both national and "red" flags and sang revolutionary songs.[23] The Ruler again resorted to the arrest of some of the organisers of the procession. The arrested leaders kept in the jail went on a hunger strike, protesting against the shabby treatment meted out to them in the jail, and demanded reform of jail rules.[24]

The sequence of events had pushed popular excitement to new heights by June. And by then, Mahtab and the leadership of the PCC had firmly committed themselves to the cause of Nilgiri people. A meeting organised in Cuttack on 9 June, known as 'Nilgiri Protest Meeting', sympathised with the hunger strike and observed that the "movement in the states should never stand in the name of Congress but Congress should always welcome it and extend it the required assistance". The meeting passed a resolution extending total support to the Nilgiri Movement in its fight for civil liberty and hoped the *Durbar* would ensure "its early fulfilment".[25] By June, a full-fledged organisation called *Praja Mangal Samilani* started functioning with its headquarters at Alsuan. Kailash Chandra Mohanty remained its President. Alasuan more or less projected as a Congress *Ashram*, housed the refugees who sneaked into this place to avoid arrest by the state police. In fact, Chintamani Behera (*Sarbarakar* of Nilgiri State) and Sadhu Parasad Bidyadhar Mohapatra (rich merchant of Balasore) came out with financial support for the organisation. The house of Chintamani Behera was used as the office of *Prajamandal* and he arranged food for the activists staying there.

Besides, the wife of Kumar Uday Nath Birbar (a *Zamindar* of Cuttack and the relative of Nilgiri ruler) was appointed as the treasurer of the association and undertook to meet the expenses of the association. Contributions for the association were also collected from the villages. The association established rapport with the Congress leadership and co-ordinated contacts with OSPC.[26] The Congress leaders of Orissa and Balasore DCC frequented the place including Mahtab and Sarangadhar Das (Secretary, OSPC).

The *Prajamandal* highlighted the popular demands like abolition if *bethi, salami,* unjustified fines, state monopoly on articles except excise items, and also abolition of wood rent. Besides, the scrapping of *Sarbarakari* system and its replacement by appointment of Tahasildars with salary, reduction of rent to half, reform of forest, judicial and jail laws and steps to check corruption in the state administration and "humanisation" of police administration were focused. In this way, the misrule and illegal exactions of the administration were sought to be removed. With its long-standing contact with Gandhian reformist trend the association also stressed welfare measures to be sponsored by the state in terms of provision of roads to villages, establishment of a registration office, hospitals, more primary and high schools, provisions for drinking water, employment of the Youth, village industries, and stopping of gambling, As regards civil liberties. right to hold public meetings and the recognition of *Prajamandal* etc., were emphasised.[27] The *Prajamandal* met on 11 June and decided to press before the ruler the demands to recognise the *Prajamandal* as well as the right of citizenship, failing which,

civil disobedience would begin. Sarangadhar Das also attended the meeting.[28] On 22 June, States Peoples Committee reached Balasore to conduct the enquiry into the Nilgiri State. Nearly 200 people from the State appeared before the Committee. The Committee included leaders like Balwant Rai Mehta, Mahtab, Sarangadhar Das, Lal Mohan Patnaik, Mukunda Prasad Das (Speaker of Orissa Assembly) and other *Prajamandal* and local activists.[29] The popular grievances discussed above were put before the committee. The enquiry was followed by a meeting preceded by a procession where the leaders addressed the audience. Sarangadhar Das, advised the people of Nilgiri to "violate the ordinances" of the ruler prohibiting the meeting and to "overcrowd" the jail.[30] This had instant effect on the people. In their bid to disobey state laws by holding meetings, several people were arrested. The arrested included persons both from the state and Balasore district.[31] Few young participants also got arrested... Faced with the massive arrest of leaders, the *Prajamandal* further intensified its move for *Satyagraha*. On the day of the *Ratha yatra* (Car Festival of Lord Jagannath), nearly 4,000 people resisted the "collection of fines and attachment of property". The novel feature in this resistance was the participation of tribals with "bows and arrows" who had gathered in Nilgiri to celebrate the car festival.[32] This led to the arrest of 98 people. The number of arrests by 14 July reached 116. A few state officials like Purna Chandra Naik (a School Sub - Inspector of Nilgiri administration) were dismissed for their collaboration with the *Prajamandal*. The rent free tenures (*Lakhiraj*) of certain *Brahmins* were taken away for siding with the movement.[33]

At this point, the Congress leadership extended whole hearted support to the *Prajamandal*. On 21 July, Mahtab and Sarangadhar Das addressed a meeting at village Ambodia (near the border of Nilgiri). Duly received by the villagers under the leadership of Purna chandra Naik, amidst chanting of *Mahatma ki jai*, Mahtab advised the gathering to lend all support to the Nilgiri movement Importantly, he asked the people to form primary Congress committees which would ultimately help in redressing popular grievances. This advice was tendered apparently to hold back the *Nilgiri Prajamandal's* possible move to launch a no-rent campaign and violation of forest laws in case the attempt of compromise with the *Nilgiri Darbar* failed. The meeting was equally addressed by President of *Prajamandal*, Kailash Ch. Mohanty, and others.[34] Yet in another meeting[35] on the same day at Gariamal (in the British Orissa territory) mostly attended by Nilgiri subjects, Sarangadhar Das made an appeal for the enrolment of volunteers so as to stand by the tenants of Machhuapatna village who were braving the State's repression. People, in response, were asked to stand together in the meeting to condemn such repression on the poor tenants of the Patna village. In fact, the people of Machhuapatna had resorted to non-payment of tax and in turn, the State administration had unleashed terror while undertaking attachment of household properties for default of tax payment. In this collective resistance at Machhuapatna, more than a thousand villagers including tribals participated. The resistance continued for over five days, inviting massive repression by the State Police.[36] In view of this,

Sarangadhar Das advised the tenants to remain firmly non-violent in their struggle against the *Raj*. He observed that the authorities were not likely to physically hurt the tenants so long as the tenants stuck to non-violent agitation against the oppression of the State authorities. Further, he pointed out that the tenants would get full support from the Congress if they abided by the Congress creed. The meeting also gave a call to observe Nilgiri Day on 27 July. Another Congress leader of D.C.C., Balasore, Gour Chandra Das, promised to regularly remain in touch with the"locality" to lend support to the non-violent fight launched by the tenants. He also said that he would equally shoulder the responsibility of forming a Primary Congress Committee in the area covering the villages of Patna, Chandipur and Gorimal. The left-wingers in the *Prajamandal* (mostly younger elements represented under the leadership of Banamali Das) had a tendency to base the movement in terms of violent resistance to the State. The collective resistance against the illegal fines imposed by the State Administration drew sympathisers from the neighbouring villages; it also enlisted support of the tribals and the *Prajamandal* activists. These were the areas where communists had gained an effective hold. This strand of violent resistance co-existed with the broad Gandhian trend of non-violent movement vis-a-vis the state.

By the end of July, the broad pattern of popular mobilisation in the face of massive repression obtaining in the State revealed a very interesting dimension of the movement; almost all the political activities originated on the borders of the State. For instance :

1) Speakers of Balasore town inciting the people of Balasore district as well as those of State to break laws and regulations of the state;

2) people collecting on the border of the State to break forest laws of the State;

3) people collecting on the border of the State to march in processions without State's license to defy the State's regulations;

4) people collecting on the border of the State, using violence, attempting to cut forest timber of the State, damaging property and marching in a body to preach no-rent campaign;

5) *ashrams* in the border containing cyclostyled machines to bring out leaflets based on *anti-Raja* sentiment and appeals to break state laws;

6) ashrams containing proscribed literature to be smuggled into the state;

7) burning of effigy of the ruler and political agent;

8) staging of dramas or *Jatras* (street plays) in which the ruling chief or Political Agent was mocked at;

9) assaults committed repeatedly on people who refused to subscribe to Nilgiri agitation;

10) persons carrying timber from Nilgiri forests to the railway station were harassed and even violence threatened against them.

The trend of mobilisation, as depicted above, points to a few important implications. On the borders of the State *ashrams* existed. These ashrams though, planned initially as Congress and Gandhian training centres in terms of ideology and activities, came to accommodate the trend towards violence - indicating the weight of left wingers in the movement. So equally with the declared policy of non-violence; use of force assault and violence were undertaken for sustaining the movement. Importantly, the above trends also reflect a picture of mobilisation wherein political activities originated in the borders of the State and got ultimately concentrated on the Nilgiri centre, representing the *Durbar*. It meant a challenge from the periphery all round the State to the centre. One must equally emphasise the fact that the left wingers could promote their activities under the broad Congress banner. For instance, the State Administration was placed in a peculiar situation. As the entire district of Balasore, its Congress Leaders, Mahtab and Congress Ministry were firmly behind the *Prajamandal* Struggle of Nilgiri, the relation of the State with the Balasore district administration got strained. This broad support of the Congress to the movement often led to poor coordination of the State administration with the police of the British territory, under the impression that the police of British district were under the control of the Congress Ministry. Besides, the Ministry's refusal to provide police assistance to the State also strengthened such thinking on the part of administration. As a result the State Police often suspected the district police of being spies, and thus kept aloof from them in providing information or planning joint strategy against the struggle.[38]

In the context of these developments, the State administration was under pressure to explore the possibility of a settlement. Thus the Political Agent on 25 July volunteered to sign an agreement with the *Prajamandal* leaders. According to the agreement, it was decided to allow the formation of an elected *Prajamandal* for redressal of popular grievances and the staying of fines imposed on the leaders till their cases were heard. Simultaneously an assurance was sought from the leaders that a mass movement would not be adopted to resist the collection of State dues.[39] Accordingly, the ruler recognised the *Prajamandal* on 29 July. This ensured a short-lived lull to the movement against the State administration; yet the popular feeling was buoyant as in mood to score a victory against the ruler. For instance, the D.M. Balasore was critical of the prevalence of the lull brought in through the agreement observing that:

> "indeed if the agitators insist on all their demands (which incidentally have been given the widest publicity by means of cyclostyled leaflets issued from Balasore district), it is difficult to say that a speedy solution of the trouble is at hand, unless the *Durbar* is willing to face with equanimity the prospect of a complete surrender. In the event of the *Darbar's* holding out (and upto the present apart from 'recognising' the *Prajamandal* the other demands of the agitators do appear to have been conceded), the agitation, in my opinion, is bound to be intensified unless, as appears unlikely, more moderate counsels prevail among the leaders, who at the moment appear to be in a somewhat exultant mood".[40]

The D.M.'s view of' exultant mood' at least points to the sense of victory existing at popular levels. This mood must equally have been shaped by the Ruler's promise of giving the right to the people to elect their representative to the state assembly - a status at par with the neighboring British territory. The idea of assembly was of course, immediately withdrawn and the promise restricted to only the recognition of the *prajamandal*.[41] It is in fact, interesting to look into the conditions offered by the *Prajamandal* (after it was recognised by the Ruler on 29 July) to the Ruler to enable it to participate in the discussion to affect a compromise with the Ruler. The conditions were a conditional release of all *Satyagrahis*, cancellation of fines imposed on *Satyagrahis*, return of the Property attached by the Ruler, reinstatement of officials dismissed by the Ruler in connection with the movement, allowing the circulation of the *Krushak* paper, scrapping of Section 144 Cr. P.C. allowing the people expelled by the Ruler to return to their villages, and finally stopping of state violence.[42] These conditions point to the fact that *Prajamandal* was assertive, fired as it was by a sense of victory.

The prospect of *Satyagraha* including violation of forest laws by the end of 1st week of August remained the alternative in case the Ruler did not concede the demands put forward by *Prajamandal* to facilitate the compromise. As against this, the Ruler's only concessions was in terms of recognising the *Prajamandal*. At this juncture Congress leaders including Mahtab and Sarangadhar Das, addressed a meeting at Garaimal *Ashram*, on Ist August. The meeting[43] was largely attended by

people of Nilgiri state as well as the bordering villages of Balasore district. The attendance of sizeable section of Santhal tribals (nearly 500) out of a total of more than 2,000 is a broad pointer to the increasing participation of tribals in the movement. The meeting began with the chanting of songs composed by the tenants of Nilgiri detailing the Raja's oppression and the hoisting of the National Flag. Kailash Ch. Mohanty, (President, *Prajamandal*) spoke at length tracing the history and prospects of the Nilgiri movement. Talking about the objective of the movement, he observed: "If the people will have a voice on the budget of the state when the Assembly will be formed, then and then only they can have some relief". Besides, he appealed to the Santhals and other tribals to join in large numbers so that the *Prajamandal* got strengthened and the ruling Chief forced to come to terms. Thus an effort was being made to broaden the base of the movement by ensuring larger participation of tribals in the struggle. However, he advised the audience not to resort to any kind of movement against the Ruler till a decision was evolved through talks with the Ruler. Finally, he appealed for funds to carry on the struggle.

Sarangadhar Das, in his speech, appealed to maintain unity and "faithfulness to *Prajamandal*". He cited the instance of *Satyagrahis* in Machhuapatna who behaved in an "orderly fashion", when the Political Agent visited the village to conduct the enquiry. It may be noted here that, Bazalgatte, the Political Agent as part of his efforts to explore a negotiation with *Prajamandal* and the Ruler, visited *Machhuapatna* village around July end, to conduct an enquiry into people's resistance to the

collection of fines and attachment of property by the state. During his visit the people, under the advice of the *Prajamandal*, sang *Ramdhun* and remained peaceful. Mahtab, in his speech, held the British imperialism responsible and at the root of all the problems and exhorted the audience to remove the root cause. Simultaneously, he appealed to the people to support the Congress for the Congress alone was able to relieve the distress of the masses. In fact, it was under his initiative that a primary Congress Committee came to function at Gariamal, headed by Purna Ch. Naik.[44] Karunakar Panigrahi who presided over the meeting advised the people not to fear the police and state officials but to carry on the struggle. The ruler was also condemned for requisitioning police force from Keonjhar, Mayurbhanj and Dhenkanal states. The meeting was attended by many leaders from Balasore D.C.C.

THE *ASHRAMS* :

At this stage, we should have a look at the organisation of *Ashrams* and training of volunteers as part of the overall movement against the state. As noted earlier, the headquarters of *Prajamandal* came to function in Alasuan (in Soro, bordering the state) right since May. But around July, the center of activities became the official headquarters of the *Prajamandal*. As observed earlier, the Congress leaders visited the place and meetings were organised in this pocket. The initiative for opening up this *Ashram*[45] at Gariamal came from some local activists. Most prominent among them were Purna Ch. Naik, who had been dismissed in the Nilgiri movement; Udayanath Birbar (*Zamindar* of Cuttack and cousin of Nilgiri *Raja*), who most often

financed the *Prjamandal's* expenditure by providing ration and money. Banamali Das used to reside in the *Ashram*. Das (Secretary of *Prajamandal*) had just completed his matriculation and represented the younger elements of the *Prajamandal* movement and was known for his communistic orientation. He held the post of Secretary, Students' League (Balasore branch) and was thus active in the youth movement. He was camping there along with 60 volunteers (by August) for offering *Satyagraha* in the state. The number of volunteers went up to 200 on certain occasions. For example, during the visit of Political Agent to Nilgir the numbers swelled requiring special arrangement for their food. The rise in numbers can perhaps be explained by the fact that *Prajamandal* issued calls at times to get ready for any kind of eventuality. For Instance, the visit of the Political Agent, Bazalgatte, led to the decision to keep the volunteers in readiness for any sort of eventual action.

The *ashram* was also used as stores for *lathis* and axes for the use of tenants for resisting state administration. It also acted as a centre for Nilgiri refugees who left the state to avoid Ruler's oppression. The *Ashram* also cyclostyled a daily newspaper titled *Rana Dak* (War-Cry), besides printing several pamphlets on behalf of Nilgiri *Prajamandal*. The news-sheet was edited by Goura Chandra Das (Secretary, Balasore D.C.C.), who infact, frequented the *Ashram* and co-ordinated the affairs of *Prajamandal* with the Balasore DCC and he had also supplied the cyclostyled machine. *Rana Dak* was sent secretly to different *ashrams*, as well as interiors of the state such as Machhuapatna and Patpur (pockets of intense popular mobilisation) through

volunteers. Everyday, a volunteer would go on a cycle to Khantapara post office to receive the Dak and post it. Usually, the *Ashram* received letters from Mahtab, Sarangadhar Das, editor of *The Samaj,* Radhanath Rath, and *Prajamandal* officials and letters were typed out and sent to the Press and different addresses (the typewriter was provided by Purna Chandra Naik.) The *Ashram* physically trained the volunteers. Drills were conducted by the inmates along with *lathi* exercises under the guidance of "Commanders". They usually preferred evening hours to go in a procession, devoting the day time for parade exercise. During processions, they carried *lathis* and axes along with Congress flags and chanted nationalist and anti-Ruler slogans. The nature of activities suggests that *Prajamandal* sustained the movement by co-ordinating its developments with the leaders outside the state and through extended media coverage. Also the *Rana Dak* became an important means of popular mobilisation and boosting the popular morales in the face of strong repressive tactics often resorted to by the state.

Another interesting feature was that, tribals (mostly Santhals) also became the inmates of the *Ashram.* This is to be seen in the context of the leadership's effort at attracting tribals to join *Prajamandal* in order to broadbased the movement. The tribals were also trained and recruited as *Satyagrahis* to offer civil resistance. The possibility of reduction of high rent charged from them compared to the fellow non-tribal tenants and the abolition of license fees of *handia* (Rice-liquor) and *Puchwai* (unprocessed liquor)- promises held out to them by the *Prajamandal* activists, spurred them to take to the *Prajamandal* movement.

Banamali Das, representing the communist strand of leadership, did a lot in mobilising the tribals. This strand of leadership often clashed with the typical Gandhian style of functioning within the principles of non-violence. But these clashing strands were often reconciled in the larger interest of the *Prajamandal* movement. Both of them helped in popular mobilisation and sustained the movement providing it fresh dimensions. By August, several *ashram* units sprung up in villages like Ayodhya and Iswarpur and a branch was opened in Nilgiri proper (around July end) under the initiative of the *Prajamandal*. More or less, the *ashrams*[46] used to operate as rural level Congress units initially being affiliated to *Prajamandal*. Thus, the objective was to further the Congress organisation in the whole of Nilgiri State. In fact, under the initiative of Balasore D.C.C. and Mahtab, a primary Congress Committee was inaugurated in Gariamal on 1 August 1938. As pointed out earlier, it is under the overall banner of the Congress *ashrams* that Communist like Banamali Das could carry forward their secret activities, usually not permissible. These Congress *ashrams* with their trained volunteers, including tribal recruits, and the trend of inculcation of left ideology often lent militancy to the *Prajamandal* movement.

As expected, the possibility of a compromise between the Ruler and *Prajamandal* broke down as the Ruler did not accept the demands of *Prajamandal* submitted as a precondition for any negotiations. Consequently, the *Prajamandal* intensified its activities and stepped up the *Satyagraha* campaign. Gariamal *ashram* remained the hectic centre of the mass campaign and the

source for sending regular batches of volunteers to offer *Satyagraha* in the state. The response of the Ruler was to take recourse to sheer repression. Banamali Das, considered as the potential force behind popular mobilisation with his *ashram* activities at Gariamal, was arrested on 4 August while urging the people not to join a meeting to be addressed by the Ruler.[47] This only inflamed popular anger. The Ghariamal *ashram* undertook a massive preparation to organise a *Satyagraha* to protest the arrest.[48] For example, on 8 August evening, volunteers led by Purna Chandra Naik marched to a nearby field (Ambodia ground-one mile away) shouting slogans like *Nilgiri Atyachar Dhwansa Hau* (Down with the oppression of Nilgiri), *Matali Raja Dhwansa Hau* (Down with drunken *Raja*), *Biswasghataka Dhwansa Hau* (Down with the traitor) along with chanting of slogans like victory to Gandhi and Independent India. Afterwards, drills were practised under the command of Bansidhar Behera. Batches of *Satyagrahis* were despatched to Nilgiri on the subsequent days of 9, 10, 11 August. The *Satyagrahis* were forced out of Nilgiri territory by the state administration by resorting to gun fire and even use of elephants. On 9 August, in the course of a *lathi* charge by the state police, Arjuna Jena, a *Prajamandal* activist who undertook the courier activities of *Prajamandal* was brutally assaulted and got injured along with many others. After this incident, he remained untraced. The rumour gained currency that Arjun Jena was dead, killed by *Raja's* hired Muhammadan goons of Cuttack, and was *buried* in the jungle of Nilgiri mountain. But when Arjun Jena appeared alive after a few days, another story of the death of some 'Singh' came to be aired. In fact, after every round

of suppression of the *Satyagrahis*, the state administration would be faced with a larger numbers of fearless *Satyagrahis* on the next day. Thus, for example, after the incident of 9 August, the state administration had to take recourse to firing and terror by letting loose elephants to chase the *Satyagrahis* on the subsequent days of 10 and 11 August.

Such incidents also tended to inspire the use of violence. The anti-Ruler slogans raised at the time amacked off intense hatred towards the Ruler. However, the *Prajamandal* leaders as well as other Congress leaders of Balasore D.C.C., who were monitoring the developments, advised the people to remain non-violent. For instance, after the developments of 9 and 10 August, the selected number of *Satyagrahis* were flagged off to Nilagiri from Gariamal *ashram*. But, the procession was *preceded* by a mass meeting where more than a thousand people gathered and were told to carry on the struggle in a non-violent manner. The prevailing mood was best reflected in the D.M.'s report of 10 August. Advising the *Raja* to appoint an escort and seek for police protection while moving out in public, he went on to observe :

> "as anticipated, the situation in Nilgiri has deteriorated... If the agitators were shouting in this district on the border 'Down with the drunken *Raja*' and 'Down with traitor' even before the clash (of 9,10 August), it is likely that after the clash, at which one person is thought to have been killed, their feelings will be further embittered."[49]

That an intense atmosphere of deep seated anger and violent retaliation (to the extent of attempt on the life of *Raja*) backed by rumours of the death of *Satyagrahis* prevailed before and following the brutal repression of people by the ruler is a strong pointer to the intense popular mobilisation by the *Prajamandal*. The role of *ashrams* in this regard is crucially significant, as also the impact of left wing ideology.

At this stage, a fresh initiative for opening negotiations between *Prajamandal* and *Durbar* was taken up with the intervention of Mahatab. A comprehensive list of 31 demands of *Prajamandal* was submitted by Mahtab.[50] The negotiation began on 19 August with the tendering of a 'guarded' regret by the *Prajamandal* to the *Durbar* (the *Raja* had taken the *Prajamandal's* slogans like "Down with drunken *Raja*" and "Down with the traitor" as ridiculously offensive). Out of 31 demands the Ruler agreed to immediately concede 24 demands; he however rejected 7 important demands of *Prajamandal*. This stance of the *Durbar* stiffened the position of *Prajamandal* and negotiation faced the prospect of again breaking down. The *Raja's* proclamation highlighting the concessions was burnt by the people and a call for boycott was given. *Prajamandal* even advised the people to leave the state while intensifying the struggle against the *Durbar*. However, the crisis was averted with joint initiatives of the Congress leadership and the political agent (Bazalgatte). The *Raja* was forced to concede most of the demands by 28 August. The 8 demands on which the Ruler expressed reservations were referred to the Resident, Eastern States, at Calcutta. By October however, the Ruler agreed to

concede 6 out of the 8 demands. Some of these eight demands over which the Ruler showed his reservations concerned grant of general amnesty by the Ruler, discussion on the budget and a measure of responsible Government. However, the demand on budget was also partly conceded. The agreement in fact, raised the prestige of the Congress in the eyes of state subjects.[51]

Some of the demands conceded by the Ruler focused on:[52]

(a) abolition of *bethi* and *magan* (contribution to the Ruler on the days of his joy and sorrow);

(b) abolition of *bethi* used in *shikar* (hunting);

(c) abolition of the system of permission to be taken before transfer of land, except transfer of land from aboriginals to non-aboriginals, in which case too there should be no fees;

(d) mutation fees to be paid at the rate of 3 times the rental in case of sales and gifts only; in court sale, mutation fees of Rs.8/- per month to be paid;

(e) the commuted cash rent of *bethia jagiri* land to be reduced by 25/-;

(f) abolition of *salami*;

(g) killing/wounding of elephants to be penalised but other animals damaging crops might be killed on the spot;

(h) no state machinery to be used in social matters, only moral impact of the Ruler to be exercised in this regard;

(i) ban on the *Krushak* to be lifted;

(j) permission to use the forest;

(k) abolition of taxes on the sale of bamboo by *Dombs* (low caste) and brewing of liquor for home consumption.

While recognising *Prajamandal*, the Ruler's proclamation pointed out :[53]

> "I can't take any action irrespective of what my brother princes think about it. Surely Nilgiri is not the state to begin experiments with. I may assure the subjects that Nilgiri will not lag behind when other states in the agency takes steps in this direction... I have recognised the *Prajamandal* for the purpose of representing the grievances of the people in a regular manner to the *Durbar*, as I want the administration to be popular".

Thus, people came to score a victory over the Ruler by forcing the Ruler to concede certain fundamental democratic demands. The prophecy of Sarangadhar Das that : "Nilgiri is destined to be the torch-bearer for the suffering millions of Orissa States"[54] had come true. The agreement was repudiated by the Ruler again around November. In response, the P.C.C's reaction was sharp. Fully sympathising with the consistent struggle of *Prajamandal*, it roundly condemned the ruler's high handedness in banning *Prajamandal* and obstructing meetings and processions.[55] Thus the Ruler had to draft a rejoinder assuring that concessions already granted would not be cancelled and that

the princes of Orissa States would meet to discuss the initiative for the examination of the scheme for introduction of representative institutions in future.[56] Congress leadership reacted strongly and the P.C.C. warned :

> "If a pact by political department can be treated like a scrap of paper in this way, then we have to give up all hopes of ever influencing the British administration... it will be impossible for us to continue as a part and parcel of British administration where such a breach of pact is countenanced."

Clearly stating that the option of Ministry's resignation was open in that eventuality, P.C.C. observed: "If this mighty force of British administration is used to subdue the claims of people for elementary rights of human beings... we would be left with no option but to resign".[57] Unfortunately, the murder of Bazalgatte in 1939 (in Ranpur) slowed down the pace of movement here as elsewhere.

REFERENCES

1. For an understanding of nature, pattern and extent of popular mobilisation in the princely states during the period of late 1930s as well as the socio-political structures of *Garjats* of Orissa, refer, Chandi Prasad Nanda "Popular Movements in *Garjats*..." in *Reflections on the National Movement in Orissa*, pp.175-198, Bhubaneswar, 1997

2. *Home Political Files* (*H.P.*) To Chief Secretary, 16.4.31.

3. *The Prajatantra*, 27.3.31.

4. *The Desakatha*, 4.5.31.

5. Mahtab, et.al (eds) Report of the Enquiry Committee; Orissa States, (Cuttack, 1939), pp.6-8.

6. *The Samaj 6.5.31.*

7. *The Prajatantra*, 30.5.31.

8. *The Prajatantra*, 23.6.31.

9. *H.P.*, Chief Secretary's Report , 6.7.31.

10. *H.P.*, Order issued by Ruling Chief, Dhenkanal 13.4.40.

11. *H.P.*, Letter to political Agent and Commissioner, Orissa Feudatory States.

12. *H.P.* Report of S.P., Cuttack, 2.5.32.

13. *The New Orissa*, 22.10.38.

In an Article titled "Unrest in Orissa States", it is observed that the movement in the states was not spontaneous growth but engineered, controlled and carried on by the so-called leaders from British Orissa. Moreover, it is interesting to note... here that Sarangadhar Das, the prominent leader of the State people movement, in one of his speeches revealed that he found a map of Orissa (in a garden party of the *Rajas*) in which the feudatory states were painted in black; when he enquired about the reasons for it, asking the *Raja* whether it meant to show that princely states were the darkest zones of Orissa. The latter responded by requesting Mr. Das to make the black portions red. The *Raja's* comment, thus, points to a close nexus between princely

states, and imperialism i.e. the dark zones of the princely states being sustained by 'Red' imperialism.

(Refer : *H.P.*, SP Report, 29.10.38).

14. *The New Orissa*, 27.9.38.

15. *H.P.* , Police Report, 10.6.38.

C.F. Andrews had met the Governor and Viceroy over the issue. The *Raja*, under pressure, had to 'Prohibit' the system.

16. *H.P.*, Police Report 11.6.38.

Nilgiri Praja Andolona ra Itihasa (NPARI), pp.65-70, *AISPC Papers*, F.No.124 (1938-40).

17. *H.P.* Police Report, 4.6.38

18. *Ibid*, Ayodhya Village is 3 miles away from Nilgiri. The other prominent members of the *Sangha* comprised Ram Chandra Mohapatra, Purusottam Raj; Balram Raj, Pranabandhu Parida, Lakshmidhar Mishra, Shyam Chandra Choudhury and Agani Mishra (all convicted in political cases earlier)

19. *H.P.*, Police Report, 11.6.38.

20. *Ibid.*

21. *National Front*, Vol.I. No.18, 19.6.38.

22. *H.P.*, Police Report, 4.6.38.

23. *National Front*, Vol-I, No.18, 19.6.38.

24. *H.P.*, Police Report, 4.6.38.

25. *H.P.*, Police Report, 9.6.38.

26. *H.P.*, Police Report, 11.6.38.

27. *H.P.*, Police Report, 25.6.38.

28. *H.P.*, S.P. Report, 17.6.38.

29. *A.P.* S.P. Report, 25.6.38.

30. *H.P.*, Fortnightly Report (FUR), Balasore, 10.7.38

31. *Ibid.*

    In fact, the D.M., Balasore in his report observed: "It is a matter for serious consideration how far we should allow our people in the district and especially the youth of our district to become involved in the political agitation in a neighbouring friendly state... *Nilgiri Durbar* finds that Balasore is becoming a centre of disaffection directed against its administration" - Thus signifying massive popular support beyond the border and mainly from congress activists.

32. *H.P.*, Telegram to Governor's Secretary, 25.7.38.

    The reason for the resistance was the attempt to defy the Ruler's imposition and collection of fines from the 'arrested' and 'Prosecuted' leaders.

33. *H.P.*, FNR. Balasore, 25.7.38.

34. *Ibid.*

35. *H.P.*, Police Report, 22.7.38.

36. *The Statesman*, 16.8.38.

37. *H.P.*, Report of S.P. 25.7.38. The points were posed as queries by the S.P., Balasore seeking guidance of superior authority, to handle such 'law and order' problems in the Balasore district itself. The D.M. in turn, expressed his helplessness to ensure police intervention in regard to the points 1 to 8 as laws under Indian States (protection) Act. did not permit such interventions.

38. *H.P.*, Report of S.P.

39. *H.P.*, Letter to D.M. 26.7.38.

40. *H.P.*, D.M.'s Report, 5.8.38.

41. *H.P.*, Intelligence Report, 2.8.38.

42. *Ibid.*

43. *H.P.*, Intelligence Report. 2.8.38.

44. *NPARI,* Op. Cit, pp.75-77.

45. *H.P.*, Intelligence Report. 2.8.38 Report of S.P. 10.8.38.

46. *Ibid.*.

47. *H.P.*, FNR. Cuttack, 17.8.38.

48. *H.P.*, FNR, Balasore, 13.8.38.

    H.P., Intelligence Report, 10.8.38.

49. *H.P.*, D.M's Report, 10.8.38.

50. *H.P.*, FNR, Balasore, 29.9.38.

51. *H.P.*, FNR, Cuttack, 17.12.38.

52. *Linlithgow Collection*, Vol-II, Hubback to Linlithgow, 19.9.38, NPARI, Op.Cit, pp.86-88.

53. *Ibid.*

54. *The Statesman*, 16.8.38.

55. *AICC Papers*, PCC to AICC, 14.12.38.

56. *Ibid.*

57. *Ibid.*

8

RAJANI KANTA DAS AND INTEGRATION OF KALAHANDI

Lalatendu Das Mohapatra

The Eastern Zone Records Centre of National Archives of India, Bhubaneswar has recently started acquiring private papers of some eminent freedom fighters which can provide rich source materials to history of the freedom struggle in this region and contemporary India. After its establishment in 1996, the Centre requested a number of freedom fighters based in Orissa, West Bengal, Bihar and Assam to donate their papers, Shri Rajani Kanta Das of Rourkela was the first man to respond who immediately after receiving our letter despatched all the papers under his collection to us for their permanent preservation. The papers contain few correspondences from eminent individuals like Sarangadhar Das, Gopabandhu Chaudhury, Harekrushna Mahtab, Krutibash Rath and Manmohan Chaudhury. A few press clips and a reminiscence of events are also part of the documents. All these documents give us glimpses of events in the then feudatory state of Kalahandi before and after annexation of the state with the province of Orissa. The documents at present have been entitled as 'Rajani Kanta Das Collection'.

A perusal of these documents reveal us beyond doubt that

Das was in the forefront of the merger movement in the then state. We do not know anything from any other sources about the early phase of the movement in this remote state. It appears that the response to this movement in Kalahandi was not so intense in late 30s and early 40s as was in Nilagiri, Dhenkanal, Talcher or Ranpur. In terms of size it was perhaps next to Mayurbhanj and Gangpur. In 1948 - 49 it had a population of 415,827 against Mayurbhanj's 754, 314 and Gangpur's 309,271. [1] But until 1945-46 there appeared to be no major uprising in the state which might be worth enough to draw the attention of the *Prajamandala* leaders of outside world.

In his youthful days in 1930s when Rajani Kanta Das was a student of Bhawanipatana High School, the events in other princely states had a powerful bearing on his mind. Clearly he took keen interest in the *Prajamandal* Movements which were in full swing in the states like Nilagiri, Talcher and Dhenkanal. Probably he thought on a revolution in similar line in his own state. In persuance of this he wrote a letter to Bhagabati Charan Panigrahi briefing him about the conditions of the state which was intercepted during the postal transit by the C.I.D. Branch of the British police who forwarded it to the Political Agent. When the King came to know about it, the school authority expelled Das from the School in 1938. But the expulsion order was revoked following a mercy petition filed by his father Dinabandhu Das. This event was a turning point in the life of Rajani Kanta Das which perhaps made him more firm and reactionary against the old order. Though he was allowed to join the School and prepare for the matriculation examination in the

next session that was not the end of everything. Once blacklisted in the records of police, now real troubles were to follow. The local police made frequent visits to his house and harassed his family members time and again. Being disgusted Das decided to leave his parents and went to Surguja state in Madhya Pradesh in 1939 for his education.[2]

It was his stay in Surguja state which helped him to shape his mind and thought for the future course of action in Kalahandi later on. In his reminiscence he writes 'It was Surguja state in Madhya Pradesh, which was a place of more enlightenment and freedom for me.... The capital Ambicapur was about 200 miles away from Railway station. It was more advantageous for my self banishment. I studied to build me up independently. I renewed my contact with the scholars in the outside world without any inconvenience there. Exchange of views, meetings and associations helped me to build up my own ability and image."[3] During this time his poetic talent was revealed after the publication of his first book *"Sangharsha"* in 1940 in Bhadrak. The book is a compilation of poems which were composed during his school days whose manuscripts he had kept concealed for many days fearing their destruction by the police. The revolutionary spirit of the poet was silently expressed in his poems which urge to get rid of age old bondage, traditional establishment and old social order. These poems had so much impressed poet Laxmikanta Mahapatra that in his comments he writes, "My heart is thrilled with endless joy and astonishment after I read *Sangharsha*. In the current stream of thought of the society the poet has introduced to a massive revolution.... I

believe that the poet has brought a new inspiration for us in our literature".[4]

After 7 years of self -exils Das returned back to Bhawanipatna when *Maharaja* Pratap Keshri Deo had just ascended the throne after the death of Braja Mohan Deo. By that time the situation in the state was ripe enough for a mass upheaval against the tyranny of age old system. The *Prajamandala* Movement in some other states which had lost momentum in early part of the 40s, was revived with renewed spirit after Congress formed government in the province, and the possibility of freedom of India looking a certainty. This time the movement spread to almost all the states and it was carried out in much more organised ways than earlier. Many local leaders who had kept themselves aloof from the *Prajamandala* Movement now joined it with the hope of some political reform in their states paving the way for themselves to gain some posts. These groups were mostly carried away by the views of All India States people's Conference whose objective then was to introduce self-government in the state but were silent on the issue of merge. But the *Prajamandal* Movement led by Sarangadhar Das in Orissa which had the full backing of Prime Minister Harekrushna Mahtab and Congress Socialist Party not only wanted the destruction of age old crowns but also complete integration with the province though the Orissa branch of the Conference could not declare openly that integration of states was its ultimate objectives.[5] Prior to that the report of a survey committee constituted under the Chairmanship of Harekrushna Mahtab had recommended the complete integration of states with the

province. Now Sarangadhar Das set out to implement the task. He was actively supported by the Pradesh wing of Socialist Party. They made vigorous campaign in the states in favour of integration, where the people readily welcomed and responded them. The Congress Socialist Party of Orissa wing in its proceedings of 1947 says 'The Socialist party aims at formation of democratic government in all over Indian Union, Pakistan and Feudatory States. In pursuance of this it views the struggle of the people of feudatory states as an integral part of the struggle of the people of India against vested interest groups in other parts. The real emancipation of the people of the states lies with their ascendancy of power after destruction of monarchy. The party welcomes the Organization and movement of the people which started after 15th August. The party expresses its pleasure over the Union of the people in the states like Baramba, Tigiria, Bamanda and Kharsuan in Orissa against the *darbars* for their right and formation of a responsible government. The Orissa branch of Socialist Party extends its full cooperation and support to this movement in the States and directs the party members to get themselves directly involved in the movement."[6]

Amidst this background the events of Kalahandi are to be discussed. It has already been said that when Rajani Kanta Das returned back to Kalahandi, the situation was just ripe for a mass struggle against the King. During this time there was a tribal uprising in Kashipur in protest against the imposition of *malgujari* rent. Kashipur was a remote hilly tract in the then Kalahandi State. Interestingly the *Zamindar* of Kashipur was not in favour of the imposition and he is said to have silently

supported the movement launched by the tribes *Kutiya Kandhas*. This peasant upheaval was led by Jhajur Jhudia, a compounder of the hospital of Kashipur and Apudu Sahu. As a result the peasants had to face the fury of royal police in which a firing took place killing nearly 25 people.[7] Since Kashipur was a hilly tract mostly inaccessible from outside world, the people more or less remained ignorant about the incident for sometimes. But the incident was leaked by the *Zamidar* of Kashipur who did not pull well with the king.[8] The students of Bhawanipatna High School thereafter protesting against the police firing boycotted their classes. They ran a parallel school in front of the High School for 21 days. The agitation was led by the then student leader of Bhawanipatna High School Umashankar Panda and subsequently joined by Arjun Pattajoshi, a student of Ravenshaw College and Rajani Kanta Das, the *Prajamandal* leader. The latter after his 7 years exile was looking for an opportunity to mobilise the people against the crown which came at last. Soon they were joined by some more students from Ravenshaw college. In their agitation they demanded a probe of the police firing. A procession was organised to march towards the royal palace. But they were halted by the police, detained in the Railway station and forced to leave Bhawanipatna. Though the agitation was not completely successful it was Das' first occasion to unite the students and prepare for a vigorous struggle.[9]

Threreafter he left no stone unturned to organise the people for a mass merger movement. He maintained contact with Sarangadnar Das and Harekrushna Mahtab to seek their guidance to set up the organizational base of the Congress and bring the

masses to that net-work. Mean while Jhajur Jhudia, the leader of the tribal uprising of Kashipur was deported from the state. He organized the *Prajamandala* Movement of Kashipur from Cuttack with the guidance of Sararangadhar Das. However since Kashipur in those days was an inaccessible area the Prajamandal Movement led by Rajani Kanta Das in Bhawanipatna had no link with Kashipur.[10]

On 15th August, 1947 the people of Bhawanipatna celebrated freedom of the country. A ceremonial function was organized in which the Congress flag was hoisted. Thereafter a group of processionists' shouting slogans, encircled the royal palace in spite of deployment of police force.[11] This event further encouraged Das and his co-workers who now applied to Sheikh Abdullah, the President of All India States People's Conference for enrollment of their branch with that body. Sheikh Abdulah forwarded this letter to Sarangadhar Das and asked him to assist the organization. Soon thereafter the Congress organization in the state was started, to lend the merger movement to its final shape. On 26th November, 1947 a meeting was organized in Kesinga by Das in which the leaders of some neighbouring *Prajamandal* states like Kapileswar Prasad Nanda, Dibakar Bohidar and Kapur Chand Nayak attended. By a voice vote he was declared General Secretary of the Congress of Kalahandi State under the banner of the All India State People's Conference. A sum of Rs.150/- was collected from the contribution of the people attending the meeting.[12]

It was just after eighteen days of the formation of Congress organization in the State, all the feudatory chiefs of

Orissa signed the merger agreement, except the *Maharaja*. of Mayurbhanj. The states were formally annexed with the province on 1 January, 1948 An administrator each representing the Government of Orissa took over the charges of the states. For Kalahandi state Das was nominated as one of the members of Advisory council.[13]

But though the states were formally merged with the province, the anit-merger groups in many states were still active enough to obtain maximum advantages out of the chaotic situation that resulted in those transitional phase. Though the administrators took over the charges, they were not in a position to introduce any reforms or bring about any corrective steps overnight to the expectation of the people. It has already been said that there were many groups in the *Prajamandal* movement who were not in favour of annexation of the states. They would have been satisfied only with some administrative reform which would pave the way for them to gain some posts. Naturally these elements maintained distance from the radical groups of the movement. But apart from these elements there were also many reactionary elements active in Kalahandi and Patnagarh who alongwith their kings tried to regroup themselves and create some situations out of which they would derive maximum advantages. It was alleged that after merger agreement was signed by the *Maharaja* on 14th December, 1947 official documents were manipulated in Kalahandi by some trusted officials "for days together to usurp lands, properties, mines, wealth, money and other interest before the state was actually transferred to Orissa Government .... A large number of Government officials

merchants, lawyers and town elites having landed properties also received more lands and other privileges...... The mines and forests were leased out overnight to rich merchants before transfer of power."[14]

Thus after acquiring money and wealth the next course of action the royalists took recourse was to spread misinformation among the people and threat them in many ways by employing muscle power. Not only they began to spread misinformation about the merger, but also tried to demoralise the people and the Congress party workers by suverting their mass contact programmes. Their intention was to make the people drifted away from the Congress. For example the royalists tried to organise an anti Congress meeting on 13th January and 15th January, 1948 in Bhawanipatna. Originally the Congress had organized the meeting on these days in which Sarangadhar Das was scheduled to address to the people. The people in huge number had gathered there to listen to him. Taking advantage of the mass crowd the anti-merger group organized their own meeting nearby in which they tried to mislead the people against the Congress workers in their speech. However Sarangadhar Das, due to some preoccupation cancelled his visit in the very last moment. The people after knowing this deserted the place to the disappointment of the royalists.[15] After the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi they spread the rumour that the merger decision was not final and it might be annulled.[16] They tried to instigate the tribals against the non-tribals.[17] Wherever the Congress workers held mass meeting counter meeting was organised nearby. It is also alleged that on one occasion their musclemen

tried to set fire on the house of Rajani Kanta Das.[18]

However the Congress Party under the leadership of Das faced these challenges quite boldly and effectively. By the end of 1947 the people of Kalahandi had solidly rallied behind the party. The visit of Surendra Nath Dwivedy on Ist January 1948 to attend the Celebration of 'Freedom Day' evoked new enthusiasm among the people. On that day an unprecedented number of ten thousand crowd assembled in Bhawanipatna. In that meeting the Congress made public the illegal acquisition of wealth by the royalists. Dwivedy in his speech demanded an enquiry to this allegation.[19] Thereafter the Congress leaders made frequent visits to the villages and organized meetings to continue their mass contact programme. Rajani Kanta Das alongwith Umashankar Panda, Arjun Pattajoshi, Bichitrananda Mohanty not only successfully countered all the mischievous propaganda of the royalists but also regularly worked with the tribals and Harijans and spread them the messages of Congress and programmes of the government.[20] They toured to the remotest part of the village without vehicle and delivered speech in the meeting without mike in contract to the royalists.[21] But their real strength was the support of the people. Das was in regular touch with Sarangadhar Das who encouraged and inspired him from time to time through letters. In one of his letters he says, "caution them (royalists) for their false propaganda. Be organised yourself and your co-workers in suchaway, let all their conspiracies and mischievous propaganda be frustrated. The tribes are particularly very simple.... So be truthful when you work with them. To explain them about the real shape of things

is really a stupendous task."[22] Sarangadhar Das himself came to Kalahandi in May 1948 and addressed a series of meetings.[23] Regarded as *Gadajat Gandhi* in those days, his presence in the state not only evoked tremendous enthusiasm among the people, but also boosted the morale of the Congress workers.

Thus from 1948 to 1950 Das worked tirelessly in Kalahandi to strengthen the organisational base of Congress. His relentless crusade against the anti - merger groups not only resisted their moves successfully, but also consolidated the merger process by spreading the Congress net-work. As he says, "The Kalahandi Congress committee, which was already recognised by the P.C.C. had built up a strong base having organised 12 to 14 Thana Unites. They were functioning very effectively to focus the grievances of the people. Large number of village farmers, shopkepeers, Harijans and Adivasis were associated with the organisation. A group of selfless workers were moving from village to village and from one area to the other to spread the message of the Congress. The congress became a popular base in the district of Kalahandi to meet the challenges of the anti - merger forces and reactionaries".[24] By mid- 1948 Sarangadhar Das had already resigned from Congress, but worked with the people through "Nabajiban Mandali". Through that organisation he was in touch with Das and continued to advised him.[25] Later Sarvodya leader Gopabandhu Chaudhury with his assistance began to spread the Sarvodaya message in Kalahandi.[26]

However inspite of his devotion and sincerity to the cause of *Prajamandal*, Das could not remain in Congress for a long

time. The provincial leadership of the party could not extend their prolonged support to the *Prajamandala* leaders. As a result many of them felt raderless. Sarangadhar Das resigned from Congress following his differences with Mahtab on the issue and subsequently joined Socialist Party. But he never lost touch with Rajani Kanta Das and advised him from time to time to face the challenges effectively and boldly of the reactionary forces irrespective of his political stand. Gradually Chief Minister H.K. Mahtab began to adopt a reconciliatory attitude towards the Princes. Now some elements of pro-royalists tried to weaken the *Prajamandal* by their entry into Congress. As a result Congress became accommodative to these elements. Now Das developed difference with the PCC and resigned from the General Secretariship of the District Congress Committee in 1950.

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9

ANACHRONISTIC EXISTENCE OF THE PRINCELY STATES AND THE INEVITABLE INTEGRATION WITH THE PROVINCE OF ORISSA

Bijay Chandra Rath

The small Orissa states were the most vulnerable because of their incapability of facing the threat of change. Majority of them were viable neither in terms of territory nor in revenue resources and as such could not rise up to the expectations of the people, who were deeply under the influence of national awakening in British India. The utter backwardness of the states alongwith the irrational reactions of many rulers nullified the possibility of the introduction of reforms. The Political Department also maintained its indifference to any idea of administrative and constitutional reforms in the States. During the war period (1939-45) it (Political Department) remained busy in exacting the support and co-operation of the States in the war efforts. Even administrative co-operation among the States on matters like police and Judicial services did not work smoothly. All this resulted in the restlessness of the people.

The presence of a number of small States in between the districts of the province of Orissa created enormous administrative difficulties and it was clear that "unless the problem is effectively solved the existence of the States and the province of Orissa may be at stake"[1] The Attlee Sub-Committee of the Simon Commission (1930), which was set-up for the purpose of examining the question of a separate province for Orissa, had opined that the problem of the existence of the States all round the districts of Orissa was a serious one. The Sub-Committee expressed the view that "The Orissa feudatory States, which are not part of the British India, should be brought into relationship with any administrative set-up for Orissa," Subsequent Committees of inquiry relating to the setting up of Orissa as a separate province were all of the opinion that the problem of the Orissa States could not be divorced from that of the rest of the province.[2] Although Orissa was made a separate province, no action was taken to implement the recommendations for integrating the Orissa States with the Province.

The non-Official Orissa States' Enquiry committee, which published its report in 1939, strongly recommended the amalgamation of the States with the province of Orissa. The recommendation received general support from many quarters but was clearly forgotten in the din and bustle of the war, "but the rulers and officers of the Political Department took a serious note of it and proceeded systematically to see that no integration of any kind took place between the States and the Province." [3]

When the Cabinet Mission visited India in 1946, H.K.Mahtab submitted a memorandum published by the

Provincial Congress Committee pleading for the amalgamation of the Orissa States with the Province of Orissa. The claim for amalgamation in the memorandum was based on historical, geographical, cultural, legal and economic grounds. Though the Cabinet Mission was found to be impressed by the arguments put forward in the memorandum, "the Political Department and the Rulers were manoeuvring at the back to side track the issue of merger.[4] Rather they worked sincerely for the formation of a union or Confederation of these small States. In a note presented to the Resident Eastern States on 30 July 46, the Ruler of Seraeikalla protested strongly against the plea for amalgamation and even went on to express that "to handover the States to such unscrupulous people of narrow minded vision and low capacity will be a most treacherous and unjustified act and a gross exploitation of the true interest of the States- the Ruler and the people of the States."[5] He even suggested that "such an attempt should be resisted by all means and power and at any cost."• Ultimately no result was achieved by placing the matter before the Cabinet Mission. The Cabinet Mission did not get time " to pass from the general to the particular or to deal with the Orissa States, except in the context of the States as a whole." However, in a statement on 16 May 46, the Cabinet Mission pointed out that a satisfactory solution to the problem of Indian States could be achieved by mutual negotiations.

On the other hand the memorandum to the Cabinet Mission and the press reports about the efforts for the amalgamation of the Orissa states with the province created a great deal of misunderstanding, bitterness and suspicion in the

minds of the rulers. In order to assuage their feeling H.K. Mahatab who became the Prime Minister of the Province on 23 April, 1946 had to write circular letters to all of them (Rulers),clarifying his stand on the question of amalgamation.[6] This clarification was rather a modification and moderation of his earlier views. He pointed out, "When I say, that Orissa States should be amalgamated with the Province of Orissa, I do not mean that the dynasties of the Rulers and their titles to the Privy purse, should be abolished and the Rulers should be treated as so many laymen of the future Province, what I mean is this, that for the interest of both the States and the Province, there should be some sort of coordination without which it is clear to me, neither the States nor the Province can prosper in the present circumstances." He further suggested, "with regard to administration and planning if both parts of Orissa will combine, each one of them must give something to the other for the common good." He made it clear that the abolition of dynasties or of the Privy purse, was not contemplated by any one and all constitutional legal steps might be taken to safeguard them. He further clarified that the word "amalgamation" or "one common administration", all these expressions bear the same meaning and implication."[7] It did not mean subordination of one to the other.

The response to the letter of the premier was on the whole encouraging. Many of the Rulers concerned agreed that there should be mutual discussions between the authorities of the States and the province. But the ruler of Baramba, a tiny State, submitted a peculiar note suggesting that the districts of the Province were at one time States under the Rulers and it would be

a good idea to give back these areas to the descendants of the late rulers and form a Confederation of the States.[8] Any way the rulers of the Eastern States met in a conference at Calcutta on 16-18 July 1946 and decided to form a federal union of the Orissa and Chhatisgarh States.[9] Among other things a special Committee of the Rulers was set up to act as Regional Negotiating Committee to discuss matters of common concern with the various bodies and interests at the appropriate time. The Resident of the Eastern States was present in the conference and encouraged such a move.

However H.K. Mahtab pursued his plan of administrative collaboration with the States. He clearly envisaged that the merger was the only solution and the administrative collaboration between the States and the Province was the first stage of the merger.[10] In his bid to secure cooperation between the States and the province, he met informally some rulers of Orissa States in the presence of the Political Agent at Sambalpur on 16 October 1946. In course of his speech he laid emphasis on the desirability of one administration for both the States and the Province, in the absence of which each part would be weak in comparison with the other units of India. He pleaded " with regard to administration of law and order, food and cloth, control of river systems, development of communications, organisation of public health, development of education, and every other matter relating to the welfare of the people of both the States and the province, it is necessary that there should be joint planning and joint administration".[11] Though the discussion lasted for six hours, nothing substantial emerged out of it.

The Standing Committee of the AISPC in a meeting at New Delhi on 11 June, 46 passed a resolution making it clear that its demand for responsible government under the aegis of the Rulers, could only apply to the bigger States. Resolving particularly about the smaller States of Orissa, the Standing Commitee maintained that these States "which were constituted in recent times and are even now more in the nature of Estates than of States" should be amalgamated with the province of Orissa.[12] In the meantime, the anti-State propaganda in Orissa gathered momentum. Individual Congressmen and the Press demanded complete merger of the States with the province. In the press the proposal was still described as amalgamation of the Orissa States with the province, whereas, what was aimed at, then, was a single administration, while retaining the States as units![13] This type of publicity created a great deal of suspicion among the rulers about the real desire of the political leaders of Orissa. The Rulers were aggrieved about the manner in which they felt that the pressure was being exerted upon them to enter into closer relationship with the province.[14]

The first session of the Orissa and C.P. Regional council of the AISPC was convened at Cuttack on 1 March,1947 and delegates from 15 affiliated organisations like *Prajamandals* of different States attended.[15] A working Committee was formed with Sarangdhar Das as President, to carry on the agitation in the States and to represent the view points of the States' people in a systematic way. The objective of the popular movements in the States then was to secure sovereign rights for the people to be on a par with the provinces and to work for the merger of the small Estates into the neighbouring provinces.[16]

Eastern States Federal Union :

The rulers on the otherhand were trying practically to stem the tide of this popular upsurge in a bid to perpetuate their autocracy. They were employing new tactics in setting up rival organisations to that of *Prajamandals*, consisting of all reactionary elements and in inciting the ignorant aboriginal people to come to clash with popular organisations, which had enrolled both aboriginal and non-aboriginal as members and whose programme accorded top-priority to the immediate upliftment of the *Adibasis and Harijans*.[17] Such a line of action was highly dangerous not only to the people of the States, but to the whole of India. In Nilgiri, Mayurbhanj, Seraikella, Kharsawan, Athamalik, Bamra and Dhenkanal simple aboriginal folks were incited against the non-aboriginals.[18] In the meantime, the rulers or Orissa and Chhatisgarh States met at Raipur and formed the Eastern States union, which started functioning from 1 August 1947. The union adopted a constitution with a Prime Minister, a Chief Secretary, a Joint Police Organisation and an Appellate Court, but there was no popular legislature. The Constitution was an eye wash and transferred no real power to the people. But the bigger States like Mayurbhanj and Bastar, as well as some of the smaller States, kept out of the union.[19]

The undemocratic union of the Rulers was stoutly opposed by the people and in almost every State there was political ferment. The Orissa and Chhatisgarh Regional Council also called upon the people to resist the undemocratic conduct of the rulers.[20] Since its Ludhiana session in 1939, the AISPC consistently demanded that all the tiny States like those of Orissa

should be amalgamated with the neighbouring provinces. After the formation of Eastern States Union (ESA) the Standing Committee on 22 October,1947, again reiterated its stand and pointed out that the constitution of the ESA was entirely undemocratic, reactionary and arbitrary.[21] The Committee also approved the attitude of the "Orissa and C.P. Regional Council" as regards the ESA. Finally the Standing Committee of the AISPC demanded that "In view of the wholly unsatisfactory nature of this constitution as well as of several Individual Constitutions of various States in this region.. these small States.. must be merged into the neighbouring Provinces of the Orissa and C.P. This is the only way in which these small principalities can be democratised and the people enabled to function fully in free India."

"With the advent of Independence, the popular urge in the States for attaining the same measure of freedom as was enjoyed by the people in the provinces gained momentum and unleashed strong movements for the transfer of power from the rulers to the people".[22] So far as the larger States were concerned, like Hyderabad, Mysore, Travancore etc., they could in course of time develop an administrative structure which was comparable in some respects with the provincial models. But despite this development, they failed to satisfy the aspirations of the people, who were deeply influenced by the Indian National Movement. As a result, these States failed to enlist the support of the masses, and could not, therefore, withstand the removal of the Prop of the British power.[23]

On the other hand the position of the smaller States was still worse. "With the best will in the world, these small units did not have the resources to stand upto popular agitation, nor could they afford the machinery for a self-sufficient and progressive democratic set up".[24] They were unable to provide an administration, capable of discharging the elementary functions of a Government. "Such States could hardly have a base to stand upon when the Britishers withdrew."

Addressing the special session of the Assembly (27-29 August, 1947), the Governor of Orissa, K.N. Katju, said, "These States (Eastern States) geographically and historically form part of ancient Orissa and their people share with you a common culture, a common language and a common tradition and out look on life. All these States have recently formed a federation of their own and have all joined Constituent Assembly. Union of these States with the province is a consummation devoutly to be worked for and prayed for ...."[26]

Along with the attempts at the creation of the Eastern States federal union, some rulers systematically carried on activities against the plan of collaboration with the province. The ruler of Patna propounded the theory that the district of Sambalpur was not a part of Orissa, but at one time formed the so-called *Koshal* territory. The rulers of Patna had always claimed that they were unjustly deprived of certain Sambalpur territory by the British, when they took over from the Marathas. The ultimate aim of the ruler of Patna was to unify Sambalpur with his own State. "According to his plan as Eastern States federation would be able to stand up Sambalpur and Angul would

join the federation."[27] To achieve this objective it was felt necessary to generate a feeling of secession in Sambalpur. The much sought opportunity was made available to him, when the preliminary survey work of the Hirakud Dam Project was started in 1946. The execution of this Project necessitated the immersion of more than 100 villages. Land acquisition on such a large scale necessarily created resentment among the people and the rulers of Orissa tried to exploit the situation. This was made an issue of separation of Sambalpur from Orissa. The anti-Hirakud Dam agitation was carried on at a high pitch. The movement for amalgamating Sambalpur with the Eastern States and forming the *Koshal* province was launched only as a counter-blast to the move for the amalgamation of the States with the province of Orissa.[28] All possible steps were taken by the Government of Orissa to combat the separatist agitation. The matter was taken up by the Viceroy and ultimately it was brought under control.

In another move the political Department was planning to group together the Eastern States and attach it to Hyderabad, so that it would be too strong a unit to succumb to any kind of pressure from Independent India.[29] Authentic information was also received that emissaries of the rulers of Orissa were sent to Hyderabad for negotiation.[30] But soon after the attainment of Independence, whatever plans either the political Department or the Rulers were hatching were frustrated by the quick action taken by the Government of India.

The reaction of the common people to the said scheme of the formation of *Koshal* State was not favourable. The desire of the great majority of the people in the Oriya speaking States was

to come under the same administration as the people in the province, so that they could march together towards the goal of free and federal India.[31] Public meetings were organised in many of those states and resolutions were passed demanding the merger of the small States into the neighbouring provinces, popular representation in the Constituent Assembly and the introduction of full democartic Institutions as in the Provinces.

States Department :

When the States Department was created, H.K. Mahtab, the Premier of Orissa, submitted a memorandum to Sardar Patel, stressing the need for closer cooperation between the administration of the States and that of the Province.[32] He described the various administrative difficulties created by the states being interspersed in the province of Orissa. For the solution of the problem of the Orissa states, the Premier suggested, on the analogy of the solution applied in Burma, where the *Shan* States had created a similar problem, that "a similar plan may be adopted for Orissa and there may be formed a federation of Orissa States to be administered jointly with the province of Orissa for certain common purposes."

Nilgiri Incident

After the achievement of Independence, there was acute trouble in the small State of Nilgiri, adjacent to the district of Balasore, An unsatisfactory situation was created "due to the reported determination of the Ruler to suppress the *Prajamandal* and the movement sponsored by it to secure responsible Government in the state."[33] The Ruler had succeeded in forming

a party of his own consisting mostly of aboriginals and had, besides, recruited a number of Gurkha armed guards for his police force & obtained two platoons of armed police consisting mostly of Punjabi-muslims from the Eastern states' joint police force. "The just or fancied grievance of the aboriginal supporters of the Ruler were exploited to put them in a rebellious mood and to induce them to imagine that the *Prajamandal* party were responsible for all their shortcomings, for their inferior position in the economic and social life of the state and indeed for all wrongs done to them in the past".[34] They were instigated by the State Administration to loot and set the houses of the *Prajamandal* leaders on fire. When active encouragement was given to them to do certain things, they did not remain within the bounds and went on indiscriminate rampage. This resulted in complete anarchy in the State. "It was obviously not possible for the Government of Orissa to watch these developments in a neighbouring State with complete unconcern.[35] Regular reports about the state of affairs in Nilgiri were sent to the States Ministry and Government of Orissa pressed for early action, as "it was not safe to allow lawlessness to prevail in a neighbouring area, in the interest of the administration of the province itself". After due consideration of the facts presented to them, the Dominion Government authorised the provincial Government to take over the administration of the State and restore law and order. In the meantime the entire administration of Nilgiri had been paralysed and there was complete lawlessness and anarchy. Accordingly, on the morning of 14 November, 47, the District magistrate of Balasore was authorised to proceed to Nilgiri to

take over the administration from the Ruler. A telegram was sent to the Eastern States Union at Raigarh requesting them to withdraw their force form Nilgiri in view of the Dominion government's decision to take over its administration. The Orissa military police marched to Nilgiri from Balasore amidst warm and enthusiastic welcome of thousands of people on the way. They disarmed the union police and the Ruler was wise enough not to offer any futile resistance. On arrival at the headquarters at about mid-day on 14 November, the District Officer contacted the Ruler, who voluntarily handed over the administration of the state and issued a proclamation "expressing his gratitude to the Dominion Government in coming to his help and enjoining on all his subjects and his state officials to extend their fullest support and cooperation to the new administration."[36] The administration of Nilgiri was carried on by the Orissa Government as on occupied territory till the 1 January, 1948, when the occupation was legalised as merger.

After the take-over of the administration of Nilgiri, on 20 November, 47, the States Ministry convened a meeting to consider the constitutional future of the Orissa states. The meeting was attended, among others, by H.K. Mahtab, the Premier of Orissa, Secretary and Additional Secretary of the Ministry of States, and the Regional Commissioner of Sambalpur. Three conclusions were reached; first, that the Eastern States Union should not be recognised by the Government of India, secondly, that, 'B' and 'C' class states should be asked to agree to common administration of certain subjects by the provincial Government and thirdly, that the States Ministry should call a

meeting of the rulers of 'B' and 'C' class States at Cuttack some time in December."[37] The conclusions were tentative in nature and the issue was kept wide open.

The next day the Secretary of the States Department apprised the Minister, Sardar Patel, with the tentative conclusions, which had been reached at the meeting with H.K. Mahatab and others. Discussion with the minister was also made on the problem of smaller states. The States Ministry had taken a serious note of the fact that with the transfer of power, there was increasing agitation in the Orissa States for responsible Government. The Minister was not at all in favour of according recognition to the Eastern States Union. The union was not a homogenous unit, nor could it be justified on linguistic, enthnical or geographical consideration. The Minister felt that" a union which was unrepresentative even in relation to the rulers and which paid no heed to the rights of the people had no justification to exist. [38] He was also against the formation of two separate unions of the Orissa States on the one hand and the Chhatisgarh states on the other.

As for H.K. Mahtab's proposal, that a series of subjects (as mentioned in the memorandum of Orissa and Orissa States submitted to Sardar Patel after the creation of the States Ministry) which could be administered by the province for these states for the mutual advantage of both, it was found unsuitable to solve the problem of the smaller states. It was feared that it could only result in friction and bad government. Sardar Patel was prepared to go all out to secure the merger of all three classes of Orissa States with the province of Orissa.[39] This stand of the Minister

was contrary to the assurances held out in his own statement of 5 July and in Lord Mountbatten's address to the chamber of princes on 25 July, 1947. Sardar Patel mentioned that those States did not have the capacity to survive. By securing their merger, "the Government of India would only be saving the Rulers from the fury of their subjects newly awakened to the consciousness of their rights."[40] While the Secretary of the State was keen on maintaining the constitutional position, Sardar Patel would be credited for pursuing a realistic approach.

The State Ministry then concentrated on the problems that would arise in the event of the acceptance by the Rulers of the Orissa States of the proposal of merger. The Chief problem was pertaining to the privy- purse. In the formula that was devised (subsequently known as the Eastern States formula), the Rulers were to get 15 percent on the first lakh of the annual revenue, 10 percent on the next four lakhs, and 7½ percent on all revenues above five lakhs, subject to the maximum of 10 lakhs.[41] The financial year of 1945-46, was taken as the basic year for ascertaining the privy purse. It was also decided that the privy purse would be tax free. Certain Private properties, including palaces, were conceded and the personal privileges of the Ruler, his wife, his mother, the heir-apparent and his wife, were to be guaranteed. "The basic idea was that the Government of India should not create, as an aftermath of the merger, any social or economic problems for the Rulers or their numerous dependents".[42] It was also found advantageous on the part of Government of India, "taking over the States and then employing the agency of the provincial governments for their administration,

for then, at any rate until the new Constitution was framed, the Government of India could retain control over provincial governments in respect of the administration of these areas." The Law Ministry then drafted a merger agreement depicting all points in 5 articles. These proposals of the States Ministry were accepted by the Central Finance Minister and the Premier of Orissa as reasonable.

Rift in the Eastern States Union :

In the meantime, there emerged a new development, which strengthened the grip of the States Ministry. Difference of opinion surfaced in the Eastern States Union as some subscribed the view of scrapping it completely. While some others were inclined towards cooperation with the provinces and one or two small States were even prepared for merger with the neighbouring provinces on the ground that they did neither have the resources nor the machinery for the functioning .of full responsible government.[43] The Ruler of Khairagarh, at a meeting of the council of rulers, submitted a note "favouring full and unconditional cooperation with the neighbouring provinces, including, if necessary, the merger of the States,[44] This view was opposed by the rulers of Korea. and Patna. Also many rulers of the smaller States held the view that "each should decide for himself, take his own course, and scrap the Eastern States Union." The ruler of Athagarh made an announcement on 18 November'47, exhorting his fellow rulers to dissolve the Eastern States Union, "which has proved an administrative failure and expensive and useless appendage" and to grant full responsible government without delay.[45] He deprecated any unwise attempt

for maintaining territorial integrity of those small States, who could never administratively and economically subsist, "a merger of such States is an axiomatic truth needing no resistance;" He floated the idea of creating a "Sub-province" of the Orissa States including Angul and another sub-province of the Orissa province minus Angul, each having its Independent legislature and executive under one Governor and with a joint Judiciary.[46]

The Rulers met at Calcutta in camera on 25 November.[47] They were greatly agitated over Nilgiri affair and were very much annoyed with the ruler of Athagarh because of his views which they considered as a stab in the back.[48] Despite the difference of opinion, some rulers met Sardar Patel at Delhi on I December, 47 urging upon him to accord recognition to the union. The minister maintained that "the fate of 'B' and 'C' class States was inextricably bound up with the adjoining provinces and they could not stand on their own feet." He emphatically suggested that the Eastern States union be dissolved, the Oriya-speaking States be integrated with Orissa and the Hindi speaking states with the Central provinces.[49] And in case of 'A' class states, he suggested joint administration of certain subjects with the province.

On the other hand, H.K. Mahtab did not attach much importance to the conclusions arrived at the meeting of the States Ministry on 20 November 47,[50] though the provincial government had prepared a memorandum in accordance with the decisions, He could not appreciate the stand taken by the Secretary, States Department, who was "relying too much on the constitutional position and excluding 'A' class States from joint administration."

Meanwhile, reports about the stubborn attitude of the 'A' class rulers, who were determined not to have any truck with the province, prompted the Premier to discuss the situation with Sardar Patel. He pressed the minister to come down to Cuttack himself and to settle the matter as he would think proper. The minister was hesitant at the beginning because of the adverse opinion of the Secretary. V.P. Menon did not like the idea of taking a risk, as he thought, "If I failed to bring about the merger, whether partial or complete, Sardar could then have tried his hand as the higher authority, but if the two of us went together and failed to accomplish anything, the entire plan would collapse."[51] But the Minister of States at last decided to participate in the conference which was scheduled to be held at Cuttack on 14 December, 1947.

Controversy over the issue of merger :

With the attainment of Independence, there emerged two opposing forces in the States of Orissa. While one demanded merger of the States with the Province, the other demanded the formation of popular ministries under the aegis of the rulers.

The Regional Council of the AISPC, amply aided by the provincial government of Orissa, championed the cause of the merger. Sarangadhar Das, the President of the Regional Council suggested to the Grouping Sub-Committee of the AISPC in November, 47, to withdraw the call for the introduction of responsible government and to demand the merger of the States into the province.[52] The Grouping Sub-committee recommended

on 28 November that 26 Orissa states should join the province of Orissa.[53]

On the other hand, certain *Prajamandal* leaders fell into the trap of the Rulers and carried on a propaganda that the people wanted to enjoy responsible government within a States union and later merge into the province of Orissa.[54] The rationale for such a move was that in the event of merger with the province, the States peoples feared that they would be exploited and dominated in every sphere because of their backwardness. In case of the formation of a separate unit for all the States, the members of *Prajamandal* would hold important administrative position, such as ministers and so there would be no scope for exploitation and the loss of identity of the States.[55] This approach was essentially myopic and guided by vested interests. In the meantime, the installation of the ministries in some states further complicated the situation. Those who constituted the ministry were really the leaders of the *Prajamandals*, responsible for carrying on the movement in the States. Under such circumstances, they did not come forward to support the cause of merger. The entire situation in the States became confusing, when obstructions were created to the issue of merger by both the Rulers and the *Prajamandals* in some States.

The ruler of Athgarh, backed by some other rulers, carried on a vigorous campaign of vilification against Orissa Ministry and pleaded against the merger of the States with the province.[56] These Rulers gained over some leading *Prajamandal*, leaders, like Radhanath Rath of Athgarh, Pabitramohan Pradhan of Talcher, Bipin Behari Patnaik of

Tigiria, Pratap Chandra Patnaik of Baramba and others, who, till that time, supported the cause of the amalgamation of states with the province of Orissa.[57] There was a deeplaid plot on the eve of Sardar Patel's visit to frustrate the efforts of the Dominion Government in the direction of merger. The members of Narasinghpur *Prajamandal* entered into an agreement with the Ruler without consulting the Regional Council.[58] Pabitra Mohan Pradhan asked to *Prajamandal* leaders to defy the instructioins of the Regional Council and to meet in a separate conference.[59] This group led by some Chief Ministers and ministers of different States, made preparations to organise a conference at Cuttack on 14 December, to demand the introduction of responsible government under the aegis of the rulers. That was the day when Sardar Patel was also scheduled to meet the Rulers of Orissa in a conference. Many *Prajamandals* also passed resolutions protesting against the scheme of merger, the copy of which were sent to the Ministry of States and the Provincial government.

In the mean time, Sarangadhar Das, the President of the Regional Council, undertook extensive tours to different States in a bid to mobilise the opinion in favour of the merger. In the process, he met with opposition from different quarters, H.K. Mahtab, the Premier of Orissa, also sincerely tried to stall the activities of the antimerger group. On the night of 13 December he met Pabitramohan Pradhan and could succeed in effecting a change in the latter's attitude on merger.[60] He (H.K. Mahtab) asked him to cancel the meeting which was to be held the next day or also threatened him the withdrawal of all sympathy and support of the government to the *Prajamandals*.[61] Ultimately

Pabitramohan Pradhan relented because of the tough stand taken by H.K. Mahtab. On that fateful night of 13 December there developed an acute difference of opinion among the leaders of this group and many became the protagonists of merger overnight.[62] The credit for the change in the situation at that critical juncture should certainly be attributed to H.K. Mahtab.

When Sardar Patel's Programme at Cuttack was finalised, Sarangadhar Das had convened a meeting of the Regional Council to be held during that period, in which all the members would unanimously welcome the move of the Dominion government.[63] But he had to cancel the meeting. He called for explanations from many individual workers of different states and from the *Prajamandals* of Tigiria, Baramba, Athagarh, Narasinghpur etc.[64] But after this controversy over merger issue, the influence of the *Prajamandal* over the people of the states declined to a very great extent. No one expected that merger of the States with the province would come so soon after Independence. Events overtook the calculations and consequently some amount of confusion ensued.

Conference with the Rulers:

Sardar Patel, the minister of States, V.P. Menon, the Secretary of States Department, and others reached Cuttack on 13 December 1947. Soon after arrival, all of them alongwith the Governor, Premier and the ministers of Orissa, carried on a discussion. In the end they reached the conclusion that not only the 'B' and 'C' class states should be amalgamated with the province but that the 'A' class states should also be tackled in the same way. The memorandum which was drafted earlier at the

instance of the states ministry was scrapped and a new memorandum was quickly prepared and printed overnight in the light of the new decision, which was circulated the next morning.

Next day, on 14 December, the conference started first with the rulers of 'B' and 'C' class states at 10 AM in the morning 12 rulers participated[65] and three others could not attend the meeting. The proceedings of the conference started with the address from the minister. He (the minister) stated that the reason for inviting the rulers of Orissa States was the growing discontent among the people, "which had created a pressing problem, demanding immediate solution as the safety of the Rulers and the people was in danger.[66] He presented the facts in a persuasive manner and cautioned the rulers about the bleak future ahead of them. He exhorted them to voluntarily relinquish all power and authority, as they had no resources to build up a stable Government. "If the Rulers transferred their powers to a responsible government like Orissa they would be fully discharging their responsibility to their subjects and the Government of India would in turn be interested in guaranteeing the privileges, honour, dignity, and happiness of such Rulers".[67] He concluded his speech with a grim warning that unless they listened to his advice, "the Rulers, after being ousted by their people, would have in the end come to Delhi, by which time things might have gone sofar that he would no longer be in a position to help them."[68] The main part of the discussion was spent on the question of privy purse and other facilities to the Rulers. Finally, the Rulers realized that " their continued existence depended on the good will of their people and the

support of the government of India, both of which they lacked and that if, owing to agitation, the administration of their states were ultimately taken over by the government of India, they might not even get the privy purse, which was now being guaranteed to them".[69] Ultimately 12 rulers agreed to the merger on the same evening and it was decided to ask the rulers of the remaining three states, who could not attend the conference for illness or other reasons, to sign the agreement later.

At 2.30 PM, on the same day, the conference of the 'A' class rulers was held.[70] The position was explained to them on the same line as had been made earlier to 'B' and 'C' class rulers. The ruler of Mayurbhanj submitted that he had already set up a government composed of popular representatives and so could not make any commitment without consulting his ministers. However, there was a strong current of popular opinion in favour of local autonomy. So he was left out of the discussion. The minister of states felt that the course of merger which was proposed to 'B' and 'C' class rulers was the best plan he could suggest. But as the discussion proceeded, it became evident that these rulers were in no mood to accept the proposal of merger. Sardar Patel lost his patience and warned them about the serious consequences that would follow. The meeting was adjourned.

It was feared that if no agreement could be made with the rulers of the 'A' class states, before the departure of the minister from Cuttack, there was every likelihood that their attitude would stiffen. Failure to arrive at an agreement with these rulers would affect disastrously the prospect of the negotiations with the Chhatisgarh rulers, which were scheduled to be held the next

day.[71] At about midnight, (14 December), the Secretary of States Department took the ruler of Dhenkanal, whose position was very shaky inside his state, into confidence. He readily agreed to merger, on the promise that all his demands, if found reasonable, would be conceded.[72] He was requested to inform all other rulers that "If they did not follow his example, the Government of India would be compelled, in the conditions prevailing in Orissa, to take over the administration of their States".[73]

This stern warning worked and the Ruler of Patna met the Secretary of States Department in the early hours of the morning of 15 December. After some discussion, other rulers were brought in. The rulers of Patna, Sareikalla, Gangpur and Sonepur submitted a memorandum to the Secretary of States, containing a list of their demands.[74] They included, (1) that there should be an Upper House of the Orissa Legislature to accommodate the rulers of 26 states or their successors, (2) that the terms of succession of the rulers should continue to be the same as in the Instrument of Accession signed by them in August 1947, (3) that the privy purse of the rulers should be fixed in perpetuity and guaranteed on the same basis and principle as would be the case with other larger Indian states, (4) that the personal rights and the prerogatives of the rulers as heretofore enjoyed should continue. The Secretary retained the memorandum and told the rulers that "the Government of India can not commit themselves to these questions. I promise to consider them.[75] The rulers raised certain other point in connection with their private properties, privileges etc. The Secretary a spirit as possible.[76] Some of the proposals were deferred till the views of the

provincial government were heard. At last the rulers of 10 "A" class states signed the document of merger in the morning of 15 December. After the signature of the merger document, the Secretary of States handed over a letter[77] as promised earlier to the Rulers of Patna, Boudh and Kalahandi and formally to all Rulers subsequently, which clearly revealed that certain amount of pressure was exerted upon the rulers in getting their approval for merger. The letter contained the following statement :- "I am glad that you have signed the agreement. I mentioned to you the peculiar position which your state occupies among the Orissa states. The Government of India are most anxious to maintain law and order. We can not allow your state to create problems for the Government of Orissa, and if you had not signed the agreement, we would have been compelled to take over the administration of your state." The rulers and the Secretary of States were in almost continuous session from 10 o'clock of the previous night to about 9 in the morning of 15 December, when the agreement was signed. Under this agreement the Rulers ceded to the Dominion Government, "full and exclusive authority, Jurisdiction and powers, for and in relation to the governance of the state and agreed to transfer the administration of the state to the dominion government on the Ist day of January 1948." Then the minister of states and his *entourage* left for Nagpur to meet the rulers of Chhatisgarh states.

On 16 December, 1947, Sardar Patel issued a statement explaining the background of the agreement with the rulers of the Orissa and Chhtisgarh states,[78] in course of which he stressed the following important points: (a) that democratisation of the

administration, which had long been the key note of the Congress policy towards the states had become a pressing problem since 15 August 1947, (b) that democracy and democratic Institutions could function efficiently only where the unit to which these were applied could subsist in a fairly autonomous existence. Where on account of smallness of its size, isolation of its situation, the inseparable link with a neighbouring autonomous territory, the inadequacy of its resources and the incapacity to maintain a self contained administration, a state was unable to afford a modern system of government, both democratisation and integration were clearly and unmistakably indicated. He pointed out, "the settlement which we have reached at Cuttack and Nagpur is actuated by these motives, prompted by these considerations and governed by these principles." He maintained that the agreement that was signed was in the best interests of the rulers, the people and the country at large.

On 23 December, in the exercise of the powers conferred by the Extra provincial jurisdiction Act, 1947, the Government of India delegated to the Government of Orissa the power to administer the Orissa states "in the same manner as the districts in that province." Then the Ministry of States was flooded with large number of telegrams apparently sent being inspired by the rulers or their *Diwans* or their adherents, expressing dissatisfaction with the impending merger of states with the Province.[79] The Government of India remained tough in dealing with such a situation and requested the Premier of Orissa to take necessary steps to nip the movement in the bud and to warn the

rulers (with whom the responsibility of the management of the States remained till the 1 January, 48) to see that the agitation of any kind did not gain ground.[80] The merger of the states with the province of Orissa became effective form 1 January, 48, which marked the grand finale of the activities that crowded the period from 1938 to 1947.

The 25 states which merged with Orissa included Sareikalla and Kharsawan. Soon after the merger, an agitation started in these two states demanding their merger with Bihar, on the ground that "the majority of the population were adibasis and that geographically the two states were part of the Singhbhum district of Bihar." The relation between the two provinces, Bihar and Orissa, got strained over this issue, The *Rajahs* also took part in the agitation and for some time, there ensured complete chaos and the administration in both these ex-states was carried on with the help of military police. Finally, the central government stepped in and "on further consideration, however, it was realised that on account of the situation of these two states as Island territories in Singhbhum district, it was impossible for any government other than that responsible for the administration of that district to administer them effectively".[81] Accordingly it was decided to take over from the government of Orissa the administration of these two states and were handed over to Bihar on 17 May 1948.

The only state that was left out of the scheme of merger was Mayurbhanj. But, in the course of a year, the Ruler himself

"got disgusted with his own government", and pleaded for a take over of the state. On 17 October, 1948, the Ruler of this State signed an agreement of merger. The state was taken over by the government of India on 9 November and a Chief Commissioner was appointed to administer it. On 1 January, 1949, the state was merged with the province of Orissa.

Conclusion :

The States lacked any historical claim to the status that they had enjoyed for a long time. It was a calculated policy of the British Government which provided them an elevated position to counteract the forces of nationalism in the provinces of British India. Under such a situation the rulers were tempted to pursue their own autocratic ways without any obstruction from the Paramount Power. In the process they lost the popular support of the masses and, when the Paramountcy lapsed, it became difficult for them to withstand the pressure in the absence of the prop of the British power.

The impending departure of the British still more strengthened the demand of the people for the introduction of responsible Government and other radical reforms in the States. The ensuing chaotic political situation necessitated the intervention of the Central Government and there was no hesitation on its part to emasculate the rulers in the interest of the people. The rulers never argued from a position of strength.

But the integration of the princely states with the rest of India was not planned in advance. Referring to it, (integration)

Durga Das pointed out, "Patel told me it was the result of fortuitous circumstances which were helped by the wave of nationalism in which the princes were caught up".[82] As regards the merger of the small states were concerned, it "began in Orissa by accident and the process spread from to other areas."[83]

As to the method employed in bringing about the merger of the States in Orissa, it was controversial. The official version on the question of integration as mentioned in the white paper on Indian States, was that the take-over of the small states was smooth.[84] Sardar Patel had long discussion with the rulers and it was eventually decided to integrate the small states with the adjoining provinces.[85]

But though V.P. Menon, one of the architects of the merger, subscribed to the official view, a perusal of the sequence of events as depicted in his book on integration, would clearly reveal that the threat of coercion was applied to force the rulers of the Orissa States to sign on the dotted line.[86] The point whether the integration was voluntary or under coercion was not relevant, because under the changed political situation, the existence of the small states had become anachronistic and they were destined to pass away.[87] At that moment, as Gandhiji observed, there was no alternative to administering a mere threat of coercion.

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10

A STUDY ON THE MERGER OF THE PRINCELY STATES OF ORISSA

Kailash Chandra Dash

(I)

In the wider context of Indian politics the integration of the princely states is the endgame of British colonial power.[1] But in the context of Orissan politics the integration of the princely states constitutes one of the significant stages of the making of the grand Oriyan Orissa. This integration to a considerable extent asserted Oriya identity in South Eastern India. This paper proposes to study the integration of the states (*Garjats*) to Orissa from several perspectives;

i) Integration was indispensable for the articulation of Oriya identity and hence a major focus of this paper is to present the interaction of the *Garjat* Chiefs, elites and the Oriya nationalists from time to time for the culmination of the ambitious project of making grand Orissa (*Brihat oddisa*).

ii) The significant role of Mahtab in the merger of the states of Orissa in the forties.

iii) This demands a study of the outcome of the merger in the post-1948 phase as an assessment of the success and failure of the scheme.

(II)

Garjats of Orissa (26 in number) in the pre-merger phase constituted a part of the Oriya- speaking tracts. They are bounded on the north by the state of Jashpur in the Central Provinces, the districts of Singhbhum and Midnapur; on the east by the districts of Balasore, Cuttack and Puri; on the south by the districts of Ganjam and Vizagapatam in the presidency of Madras and Khondhamals and on the west by the district of Raipur and the state of Raigarh in the Central provinces and the district of Sambalpur in the Bengal presidency and Vizagapatam district in the Madras presidency.[2] The chiefs of these states had great contribution to the resurgence in the Oriya society and culture in the 19th and 20th century A.D. Even before that they had patronized Oriya literature and had played a conspicuous role in the shaping of Oriya mind. Jagannatha cult, an essential part of Oriya culture was appreciated in these states and *Bhagavata Tungis*, the centres of learning for the Oriyas existed in those states. Hence there was an undeniable link between the *Garjats* and the *Mughalbundi* on the basis of language, religion and culture. The Utkal Union Conference which articulated the identity of the Oriyas and demanded the making of the great New Orissa (*Visala Nava Odisa*) from its inception was attended by many *Garjat* people. Many chiefs of these areas also presided on the annual sessions of this Conference and they in their speeches spontaneously articulated Oriya demand. They had promised

support materially to the New Orissa-in-making. An intensive study of the speeches and the resolutions of the chiefs in the different conferences makes it very clear that they were responsible for the social progress and the economic growth of Orissa. The Oriyas living in the *Mughalbundi* zone as well as in the *Garjats* shared a common cultural identity which had strong Oriya element. They articulated it from within and without.

The people of the *Garjats* of Orissa demanded a greater and new Orissa in the first phase of the 20th century and for that in the Utkal Union Conference, the most significant forum to articulate Oriya cause, a demand was putforward for the *Sammilani* session to have take to place in the *Garjat* areas. Gangadhar Mishra Sharma from Dhenkanal on 28th December 1916 sent a letter in this respect which was presented in the 12th session of the *Utkal Sammilani* at Balasore in 1916. According to the letter :

The 12th session of the *Utkal Sammilani* was over, but in no year this *Sammilani* was held in any one of the *Garjat* areas. For the progress of Orissa *Garjat* mahals should not be excluded and the areas surrounding Puri, Cuttack and Balasore and the problems of these areas should not only exclusively be taken into focus. This will not end the problems of the whole of Utkala. All the inhabitants of the *Garjats* could neither understand the purpose of the *Sammilani* nor its existence. They were with great problems and their difficulties had been intensified. They have no power and way to present before the *Sammilani* their mounting problems. If the *Sammilani* desires to achieve progress for Orissa, it should accept *Garjat mahal* as an important part of

Orissa. The people of the *Garjats* do not have the independence to attend the session of the *Utkal Sammilani* at Balasore which is quite possible on the part of the people of *Mughalbundi.* It is my appeal to the leaders of the *Sammilani* and the *Utkaliya* brothers to look into the conditions of the *Garjat* people and to unite them in this all-Orissa platform with the *Utkaliya* brothers for the complete achievement of the purpose of the *Sammilani.*[3]

This provides an unmistakable evidence of the eagerness of the Oriyas of the *Garjats* of Orissa to have connection with the burning issues of the Oriyas of Mughalbundi zone.

Enthusiastic Oriyas in the thirties of the 20th century in the process of identity construction became very eager to associate all *Garjat* states of Orissa with the New Orissa before its formation. During the phase of the Orissa Committee which recommended for the amalgamation of the Oriya-speaking areas and for a boundary for the New Orissa, Pandit Krushna Chandra Acharya eagerly demanded the inclusion of all Oriya-speaking areas covering the *Garjats.* Pandit Acharya, a man of Singhbhum was a great patron of Oriya Culture. On March 27 1933 he presented an interesting article in a well-known Oriya periodical *the Asha* in which he stated that the *Garjats* of Orissa were out of Orissa and that in the auspicious moment of union (*milanara subha muhurtare*) an attempt was made to disconnect the Orissa *Garjats.* In that paper Acharya made it very clear on the basis of the Orissa Committee reports that the twenty six *Garjats* would not be connected with Orissa and that these states would remain under a special Agent of the Governor-General with the Hindi-speaking *Garjat* areas of Madhyapradesh. Their capital would be

established in Ranchi and not in Orissa. These twenty-six Garjats were separated from the natural and political Orissa. The English people usually celebrate the Ist April of every year as April Fool Day or *Huriya dina*. As the *Garjats* were excluded from the New Orissa the British probably wanted to be fool the Oriyas on First April 1936. While pondering about this development the Oriyas were nervous and weakened. According to Acharya, this remarkable exclusion of the *Garjats* would not help in the unification of the Oriya-speaking zones and the excluded Oriyas would lose their identity. The Oriyaness (*Odiyatva*) of the *Garjat* chiefs would be swept away by the imposition of a concocted theory of their origin from Rajputana. In the concluding part of his voice Acharya emphasised that all the Oriyas till the actual unification (*Garjat* and *Mughalbundi*) would observe one day of every year as the day of mourning and fasting. The fixed day of the year would be published in all Oriya newspapers for the occasion. He hoped that all the Oriyas would accept his programme in a cheerful heart. Again on 7th January 1933 a man of Saluru presented this integration problem in *Asha* in an interesting caption *Garjat Rajamane Gothakhandia hoi rahive ki?* (Would the *Garjat* chiefs remain aloof of their stock?). In that article the writer cleverly presented the desire of the *Garjat* chiefs to be out of the New Orissa and he condemned them as *Gothakhandia* despite their linkage with Oriya life and culture for centuries.

Despite the eagerness of the Oriyas of the *Mughalbundi* and the *Garjats* for unification and the increasing pressure within and without the new Orissa came into existence in 1936 without

the *Garjats*. Looking at this fragmented and mutilated Orissa a young and promising writer of the time Sachi Routray in a mock-play in the April first 1936 issue of *Nabeen* called this Orissa as *Miss-Orissa*.[4]

(III)

In the post-1936 phase there was increasing attempt for the merger of the princely states of Orissa. It was both an identitarian and ideological issue. It was the phase when there was an awakening in the States of Orissa against misrule by the chiefs and the intermediaries.[5] Against Gandhian strategy the Congress leaders attempted to interfere in the situation saturated with socio-economic problems in the states.[6] This phase was marked by an awakening among the peasants and the tribals in both *Mughalbundi* and the *Garjat* areas and this contributed to the inevitable process of the integration of both the units.[7] Many leaders of this phase wanted the integration of the *Garjats* with the New Orissa for an economically stable province. In this context the leadership of Harekrushna Mahtab is very striking. Mahtab's desire to be the key force of the Orissa power politics was an important factor of his association with the *Garjat* issue of the time. He was intelligent enough to pick up the key issue.

As a member all-India Congress working committee and Chair-man of the Orissa States Enquiry committee he gave a good reply to Ronendra Pratap Singhdeo about cancellation of *Sanad*.[8] The findings of the States Enquiry Committee were-the *sanads* granted to the so-called rulers of the Orissa States by the British Government are not sacrosanct, they can be cancelled without

violation of the rights of the parties concerned. The findings of the Committee have been criticised by Ronendra Pratap Singdeo in the November issue of the *Modern review.* [9] Ronendra held the view that the findings of the Committee are fallacious. He had attempted to prove that (I) the Orissa States were originally independent owing only allegiance to the Maratha Paramount Power, (II) that the transfer of their allegiance to the British Paramount Power was on the latter's undertaking to safeguard the internal independence of the States and (III) that the British Paramount Power has encroached upon the rights of the States at various stages. Ronedra Pratap stated further that instead of cancelling the *sanads*, all encroachments should be removed and that the States should be treated as independent owing only allegiance to the British Paramount Power. According to H.K.Mahtab;

The contentions of the learned critic of the Committee's report can be disposed of very easily only by placing his own materials in a logical form and reminding him of some historical truths.

Mahtab examined the points of Ronendra one by one.

I) As regards the first contention Mahtab stated, the Marathas had no established and settled rule in Orissa. Realization or exaction of money was their only concern. They used to farm out tracts for the purpose of collecting money easily. During the Maratha rule the *Zamindars* were also independent paying only the prescribed revenue. Many parts of Orissa were unapproachable and people did not pay any revenue to anybody

except to their local lords. It is therefore meaningless to contend that the Orissa States were only independent at that time. Before the advent of the British all the *zamindars* were independent-the whole province of Orissa was independent.

II) As regards the second contention Mahtab stated that the view of Ronendra is not supported either by history or by the terms of the sanads granted to the rulers and the *Kabuliyats* executed by them to the British Government.

III) Rejecting the third contention Mahtab presented the following questions;

1) Is it the contention of Ronendra that the relation between the States, whatever be the past history, and the British Government should be simply formal allegiance and nothing more?

Mahtab further stated that if it is contended that the States are free from any interference from British Government and the rulers and the ruled in the states are free to adjust their relations in any way they like without any interference of the British Government in the process of this adjustment, then he would support this contention. If the rulers fight for this independence Mahtab would stand by them. He thought that Ronendra did not want this independence. According to Mahtab;

It is probably contended that the rulers should be left free to treat their subjects in any way they like under the unconditional protection of the British Government. The

reply to this contention is the demand for the cancellation of *sanads* and I have no doubt circumstances as have arisen and will arise in future will make it imperative to cancel the *sanads* and bring back the Rulers to their original status of *Zamindars* with consequential changes regarding the amount of revenue paid by them.

This comment and criticism on the part of Mahtab relating to the States of Orissa amply presents his desire for drawing the *Garjats* into the mainstream Orissa.

The formation of the *Prajamandal* organization in the States Orissa was a very important stage not only to awaken the people but also to create a consciousness among the people of the states for the formation of a Greater Orissa which would articulate Oriya identity. It was the time the rulers of Orissa and Chhatisgarh states wanted a separate union which became more active in the post-Second World War period.[10] Mahtab played a very effective role during this phase against all odds. When the Cabinet Mission visited India in April 1946, Mahtab submitted a memorandum published by the provincial Congress Committee pleading for the amalgamation of the Orissa states with the province of Orissa.[11] The claim for amalgamation was based on historical, geographical, cultural, legal and economic grounds. The Cabinet Mission was impressed by the arguments put forward in the memorandum.[12] That was the time when the formation of a Union or a confederation of small states was the interesting focus.[13] His effort for amalgamation created a great deal

of misunderstanding, bitterness and suspicion in the minds of the rulers.[14] Mahtab as the Prime-Minister of Orissa clarified his stand on the question of merger.[15] For at least one year the merger issue became the key point of discussion in Orissa.[16] Mahtab arranged and attended several meetings of the rulers of Orissa and Chhatisgarh. Mahtab always emphasized on merger as a socio-economic necessity and as an assertion of Oriya identity.

A secret memorandum was submitted by the Government of Orissa on December II 1947 when Mahtab was the Chief Minister.[17] It was on the constitutional future of Orissa States. It presented some recommendations; (1) The two main points which were left over at the Delhi meeting of 20th November 1947 for further consideration in consultation with the Government of Orissa are (a) the quantum of subjects on which the states-particularly B and C class states-should be asked to accede in order that powers and functions in respects of there subjects can be delegated to the government of Orissa. (b) the question of financial contribution to be made by the acceding states to Orissa for the administration of the ceded subjects.

2) With regard to the first question two alternatives appear to have been tentatively discussed at the Delhi meeting, namely, delegation to the Government of Orissa of either-

i) A specified number of provincial subjects such as those in respect of which the Prime-Minister of Orissa has

been pressing for a common administration in Orissa States; or

ii) all subjects in the Provincial Legislative list of the Government of India Act, 1935 with the exception of land revenue

The Government of Orissa consider it necessary to take a somewhat comprehensive view of administration in States which will cover not only the subjects in the provincial legislative list and the concurrent legislative list as well. In respect of three subjects, defence, external affairs and communications, all States are expected to accede to the Dominion. B and C class states will be required to accede in regard to civil and criminal jurisdiction as well. There would then remain quite a number of matters for which a state must make administrative arrangements such as currency and legal tender, census, air, navigation, opium, banking, customs, income tax, salt etc in addition to the subjects included in the concurrent list such as factories, labour welfare, trade union etc. The Orissa Government has no administrative machinery for central subjects and cannot in any case take them over. The centre can take them over by Agreement or through supplementary Instrument of Accession. If they do not take them over completely, some subjects will be left with the States. If again in the provincial sphere the province takes over the administration of only some subjects but not all, a number of provincial subjects would be left with the States. In that case administration in the States will be three-tiered.

a) The Dominion Government or their agents will administer certain subjects.

b) The State itself will administer certain other subjects both in the provincial as well as in the federal spheres.

c) The provincial Government will administer certain other specified subjects in the provincial field,

3) Administrative arrangements must follow the constitutional set-up, the three-tier administration visualised above postulates a three-tier constitution.

4) Assuming for the moment that administration of certain subjects will be left with the State either for some time or indefinitely, it is necessary to consider what will be the constitutional authority in the States. Personal rule by the ruling chiefs can probably be ruled out altogether; it will suit none except probably the Rulers themselves and even that is doubtful. Recent events have made it clear beyond doubt that the States people will not tolerate autocratic rule in any circumstances even in a limited sphere. It also does not appear that responsible ministries can be expected to function successfully in individual states. B and C class States cannot obviously bear overhead charges of separate legislatures, separate executives and separate administrative Staff. It is doubtful if even A Class States can do so with the probable exception of Mayurbhanj. On the whole it would appear that if the States are to have any kind of separate constitutional entity at all, they must unite for the purpose but with democratic Governments at the centre and in the provinces the Union will naturally have to be a union of the States peoples and not of the Ruling chiefs.

5) The States' Ministry's suggestion to adopt a gradual policy of integration is defective in the view of the Government of Orissa. It leaves the question unanswered as to what would be the constitutional authority in the States to administer those subjects which would not be taken over by the province. From all points of view it would seem to be better and wiser to take a long range view of the problem so that any immediate or interim arrangements may be abiding in the sense that they could with perhaps minor adjustments be readily fitted in the permanent constitutional scheme that may later on be devised for the administration of the States. The parties that have to be reckoned with are, a) the Rulers, b) the people of the States, c) the provincial administration in Orissa and d) the Dominion Government.

The people of the States are definitely in favour of the immediate introduction of a democratic form of Government though there is some reason to believe that they are divided on the issue of complete amalgamation with Orissa. Some perhaps the majority would prefer absorption in the Province of Orissa, while others would prefer at least partially a separate political and economic existence.

The Government of Orissa are not anxious to absorb the States, but they are vitally concerned in their efficient administration at least in the sphere of law and order. They cannot afford to have a mass rising of the aboriginals in the

States with the ever present danger of its spreading to the aboriginal areas of the province. They cannot contemplate with equanimity political offenders and criminals seeking refuge in the so-called Sovereign States; not again the growth and consolidation of subversive movements in them. They cannot regard as satisfactory any constitutional arrangement under which their vital links of communication would be under a constant threat of being cut off or the condition of public health in the province would be constantly endangered by primitive medical and public health arrangements in the States. From their point of view Orissa and Orissa States are parts of one greater whole indissolubly linked by natural and traditional ties of trade and commerce and social and cultural intercourse. They are convinced that neither part prosper unless the other does.

6) Once it is conceded first that autocratic and personal rule by Ruling Chiefs is out-moded and must be eliminated and secondly that individual states cannot run as autonomous units of the Indian Union, the constitutional issue becomes clearer. The possible constitutional schemes for the administration of these subjects (provincial subjects and the subjects in the concurrent list) would appear to be -

i) Constitution of a separate province.
ii) Constitution of a sub-province.
iii) Complete amalgamation with Orissa.
iv) Partial integration with Orissa.

For (I) there is clearly no need and no justification. The States people are not anxious for this development either. Financially it is impracticable since the total revenue of all the States is just over a crore of rupees including revenue from central sources of income. Partial integration with the province of Orissa is not a practical proposition according to the view of the Orissa Government. For it will even then be necessary to set up a separate administration with a separate legislature, a separate executive and a separate administrative staff to administer those subjects which will not be administered in common with Orissa. In other words, partial integration with Orissa would involve the setting up of more or less the same constitutional and administrative paraphernalia as the creation of a separate province. Above all administrative difficulties involved in the partial integration would be grave.

7) There are only two alternatives (a) complete amalgamation with Orissa and (b) the creation of sub-province. The Government of Orissa was not convinced for a sub - province comprising of the areas which form the Orissa States or the resources of those areas or of the province as a whole are enough to support such a constitutional and administrative arrangement. A sub-province which postulates a separate legislature and a separate executive (under a common constitutional head) can be justified only where within the province there are distinct racial and linguistic areas. Both in Orissa and the Orissa States Oriya is the common language (barring a number of aboriginal

dialects) and the people are Oriyas excepting the aboriginals who exist though in a varying degree both in the Orissa Province and in the Orissa States.

While the people of the Orissa States have nothing to lose by their complete amalgamation with the province of Orissa, the people of the province can rightly apprehend that the amalgamation would instead of benefitting them in any way, drag them down to a lower economic level. Mainly for sentimental reasons and in consideration of the natural ties that link the two parts, the public of the province would not be opposed to the idea of amalgamation. The Government's advocacy of a complete amalgamation is further based on the practical considerations :-

a) that the accession of the States to the province would result in lowering of the overhead charges of administration per head of population of the expanded province, and

b) that after amalgamation the Orissa States-particularly their mineral and forest resources-would be in a position to make adequate contributions to the common financial pool.

The Government of Orissa is fully aware of the fact that in the existing circumstances it is not profitable for the Orissa Province to take over the administration of the States for it would be taking over a population of over 41/4 millions and an area of over 25000 square miles with a total revenue of just over a crore of rupees. Any attempt to bring the administration in the states to a reasonable level of efficiency would strain the provincial

administrative machinery to almost breaking point. Nevertheless the Government feel that they would be justified in taking whatever financial and administrative risks there may be in a scheme of amalgamation, in consideration of the potentialities of the undeveloped parts of natural Orissa and above all in the hope of building up a lager and more prosperous Oriya - speaking province which would be able to take its proper place among the united peoples of India.

This long memorandum from the side of Mahtab as the Premier of Orissa indicated not only the inevitability of the merger of the Orissa States with Orissa Province but also contemplated merger as an articulation of Oriya identity. The twentyfive states which merged with Orissa included Sareikella and Kharswan. Mahtab's role in this process of amalgamation and the final merger for the formation of greater Orissa has been explained in the newspapers of the time in terms of strategy, opportunism and even in terms of bold patriotism. The merger of the two states-Sareikella and Kharasuan with Bihar on 18th May became the biggest issue in Orissa. Many people blamed Mahtab for this great loss. As early as 13th May 1948 Mahtab as the Premier of Orissa had sent a secret report to the leaders of the States which were amalgamated with Orissa about the affairs in Sareikella and Kharaswan. The interesting report has been presented here for an assessment of the responsibility of Mahtab in this affairs. According to Mahtab -

"Suggestive news have appeared in the press to the effect that these two states are going to be integrated with Bihar. I will not be surprised if this news ultimately comes out to be true. It

is needless to say that I am taking all necessary steps against the dismemberment of these two States from the province of Orissa but I think it is useful to take a detached view of the whole situation. In order to have a correct appreciation of the situation, some broad facts have to be kept in mind always. The Orissa States were integrated with the province of Orissa not in the process of unifying the Oriya-speaking tracts but in the process of solving the problem which the National Government of Independent India had to face regarding the existence of a large number of Sovereign states. It has all along been the decided policy of the Congress as well as of the All India States' Peoples' Conference that the small states should be integrated with the neighbouring provinces. In persuance of this policy the Orissa States were integrated with the province of Orissa. The rulers of these states signed an agreement to that effect under the influence of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. Here it must be remembered that the wishes of the Rulers had to be taken into account, otherwise an Agreement from them was not necessary. This Agreement was signed on the 14th of December 1947. In all other States the Rulers and the people reconciled themselves to the inevitable integration of the States with the Province, but in Sareikella trouble was apprehended about a week after the signing of the Agreement. In order to forestall the situation Orissa Government took the permission of the Government of India to take charge of Sareikella and Kharswan before the 1st of January 1948 on which date all the States were to be integrated. Orissa Government took charge on the 30th of December 1947, but on the very same day there was a large scale hostile demonstration which had to be

dispersed by taking recourse to firing. It was represented by the Ruler of Sareikella that this demonstration was against the merging of the States in the province. Since then systematic movement was carried on by the ruler of Sareikella and his party to undo the Agreement already signed. The Ruler's party carried on the movement under the cloak of protesting against merging with Orissa and favouring integration with Bihar. It is very unfortunate that Bihar played into the hands of the intriguers. The Ruler's party made use of the adivasi population for their own purposes. The movement for unsettling the integration began to gain momentum and an attempt was made to extend the activities to other states. In January I brought to the notice of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru the conduct of the Congress Government in Bihar and the tone of certain Congress papers in Bihar. Sardar Patel who came to Patna rebuked the Congress leaders publicly there and got the editor of a certain Congress paper discharged from service. This did not ease the situation because after the Congress leaders withdrew from the scene others took their places. It is possible the Congress leaders were helping others who came in their places in all possible ways. In March lawlessness in Sareikella and Kharswan went to such a length that the valuable forests were cut down by all sections of the people. Meanwhile I approached the Ruler of Sareikella in order to come to some agreement with him. In spite of my best efforts I did not succeed because the Ruler was not to be satisfied unless he was brought to his old position which it was impossible on my part to comply with. I took the help of some other rulers to bring round the Ruler of Sareikella

but this also did not succeed. In order to gain the support of the local people there, large-scale constructive works were undertaken; schools were started; wells were sunk; cloth was distributed on a large scale; and rice was sold at a very cheap rate. A number of local men were appointed as Publicity workers. All these did not seem to have any effect on the local population. Then it was suggested to me that if officers belonging to these two states could be posted there they might bring about a peaceful atmosphere. Accordingly officers were posted but the Ruler's party did not make it possible for bringing about a peaceful atmosphere in the States. On the contrary they went on strengthening their movement for establishing a Union of Eastern States under the cloak of joining with Bihar. Our local officers there at least sent frantic reports to me that their lives were in danger because of the subversive movement which the Ruler's party were organising. Accordingly steps were taken to arrest the leaders of the subversive movement. This in the beginning seemed to have sobering effect on the people but it did not last long. All these will go to show that administration of these two States which was handed over to the Orissa Government was not a smooth affair. Added to this, those of the people of the States were opposed to the integration of the States with the Province in December 1947 gradually raised their heads in order to join the Ruler's party formed at Calcutta under the leadership of the Raja of Sareikella. Gradually the position came to this that in order not to allow Sareikella and Kharswan integrated with Bihar, Orissa Government should be pressed to support the formation of the Eastern States Union which would

mean the dismemberment of all the twenty-six Orissa States from the province of Orissa. This is a position which I cannot accept. I am sure, excepting Sareikella and Kharswan where the Ruler and his party are carrying on an agitation, nowhere else there is any difficulty with regard to administration. The talk that some other States might follow the suit of Sareikella and Kharswan is a mere dodge and it started in order to strengthen the pressure on Orissa Government to agree to the revival of the Eastern States Union. Whatever may be the consequences, I shall try my utmost to keep together the States and the Province and I can never be a party to the division of the Province into two parts. In the circumstances, if in spite of my best efforts the two States of Sareikella and Kharswan are taken away from Orissa for the time being for the purposes of smooth administration, I will not agree to the formation of a Union in order to divide the province of Orissa.

The only question to be decided by the Government of India is as to how these States should be administered smoothly. So far as administration by the Orissa Government is concerned, in spite of my best efforts it has not been smooth. These two States were not contiguous to the province. Here the isolation of Mayurbhanj worked against the province. I do not think administration of the two States by Bihar also will not be smooth because I am sure the Ruler's party then also will create troubles. I do not think they will be satisfied till their dream of reviving the Union is realised or completely crushed. If in spite of my best efforts the States' Ministry of India decided to integrate the States of Sareikella and kharswan with Bihar, I shall wait and

watch the developments and shall make full use of them as circumstances demand. I am very sorry that there is no substantial local support in these two states in favour of joining with Orissa. I am very sorry, the Ruler is against Orissa. I am very sorry Bihar has played into the hands of the intriguers. I am very sorry, the constitution of the country has undergone such a change that Government of India as such cannot compell the provincial Government to behave in a particular way. I am very sorry Mayurbhanj did not join Orissa. In spite of all these factors I am satisfied that I have done my duty and I will continue to do so whatever be the result. Orissa with twenty three States is a major province and I have full faith in her bright future".

This report on behalf of Mahtab is a clear indication of his efforts for the integration of the states of Sareikella and Kharswan with Orissa and his helplessness at the moment of the dismemberment of the two from Orissa. The merger of Sareikella and Kharswan with Bihar was accepted as a very sad news for the Oriya nationalists. Newspapers in Orissa bitterly reacted to this and became very critical of the activities of Mahtab, as the author of the merger. In this connection the article of S.N. Acharya entitled Mahtab's lead - A timely need as published in *Nabeen* (8th June 1948) deserves critical notice by all Oriyas. Acharya stated :-

The decision of the States Ministry of Central Government by which Orissa was made to hand over calmly the two States of Sareikella and Kharswan to Bihar is perhaps a monstrous travesty of justice that could be ever imagined. An adjudication of this nature, seeking as it does, to rob Peter to pay

Paul on no justifiable grounds is bound to upset the equanimity of temper and sufficient to rouse fire of those on whom it is sought to be enforced. Speculations are, therefore, rife as to the possible factors that could have influenced the centre to give a finding in favour of Bihar which exerts no less hold on the centre. But while we feel aggrieved and mingle over voice of protest with that of our countrymen, we do not, however see eye to eye with the attitude and move of a section of our people who go out of their way as to traduce the Mahtab ministry as being responsible for this loss. We, of course, do not hesitate to admit our inability to see how the Orissa Ministry should be made liable and much less, Hon'ble H.K. Mahtab, be made a scapegoat for malediction. The line of action suggested as a measure of protest is not only ridiculous, but at the same time highly suicidal in the interest of the nation. We wonder if display of patriotism could reach to such a height of absurdity. Could there be a more preposterous advice than to hold out a threat of independence to the centre: It is a matter of no mean surprise to us to find, people indulge in such irresponsible idiosyncrasies. Is it possible that Orissa could function as an autonomous unit without depending on the centre and the financial succour due from the centre being withheld ? The idea underlying this move has to be sought elsewhere rather than in this seeming earnestness for the country. These people ought to realise that this display of pseudo-patriotism is not enough to veer the public mind. Gone are the days when people used to be deluded by the tempo of the pulpit harangue. To-day the mass mind has undergone a change which would be sufficient to support faked leadership in whatever form it might emerge.

These are hard days when people are less amenable to sophistry. If it is, therefore, the intention of the reactionaries to exploit public interest to suit their political or selfish ends they are entirely mistaken.

However, it appears that those of our men who were long awaiting for a situation to come which could be taken advantage of in picking holes in the coat of the Mahtab ministry the decision of the central government came to them as a blessing in disguise. Once again it has brought to the notorious limelight a few Blacksheeps to set their tongues wagging against the Ministry. But it goes without saying that their words will cut no ice since the people of Orissa have become sufficiently disillusioned and are sick of their leadership. Should they pursue in this game any longer they can bamboozle nobody except to betray themselves in their true colours. It is most deplorable that the glorious achievements of Hon'ble Mahtab in bringing together under one administration the princely order of Orissa, should so soon became an oblivious fact. But for the noble efforts of Mahtab, the rigmarole of a Greater Orissa would have remained a far fetched vision of the dream. Even before he took up the administrative reins of this province as its Premier this question weighed in his mind seriously. He never let go any opportunity when he could bring home to the mind of the authorities the imperative necessity of the States being amalgamated in the province. A glance in the retrospect will make us recall the part he had played in this movement from time to time. He came to be associated with this problem as the Chairman of the States Enquiry Committee and also when he lately put up his scheme of

merger before the triumvirate, British Parliamentary delegation. Having impressed upon the delegation on this question Mahtab had the unique honour of being invited to the lunch with Sir Stafford Cripps. Before Mahtab the term "Greater Orissa" used to be referred to as the inclusion of the excluded Oriya tracts that remained outside the province of Orissa. Since Mahtab assumed the leadership connotation of a "Greater Orissa" included within its purview the States as well. The merger of the States in the province is being considered as a magnum opus of Sardar Patel. But by going a little deep into the matter one would find that the defacto force behind this achievement is Hon'ble Mahtab who prepared the blue-print for Sardar Patel who put simply his seal. As such it looks odd on the face of it that charges of insincerity and inefficiency, resulting in the loss of these States, should be hurled on Mahtab cabinet. One can remember with pride as to the glowing compliments that were paid by H.E. Lord Mountbatten, Hon'able Nehru and others on the administrative efficiency of the Orissa ministry with Mahtab at the helm. It redounds much to credit of Mahtab for having made Orissa which was long known to be an obscure part of the country, the cynosure of attraction. Orissa is fast making rapid headway in the path of progress and it goes without saying that Mahtab was the propelling fore behind.

The discordant elements in the country should yield themselves to the force of the times and whole-heartedly co-operate with the ministry rather than waste their time and energy to envenom the public mind against it. They should also realise that no useful purpose can be served by treading on the fair name of *Utkala Sammilani* for vindicating selfish motives. The founder

of this national institution never meant that it should be an assemblage of ragtags and bob tails and a forum for purposes other than that which vitally affects the nation at large. When the entire nation is solidly behind the present ministry it behaves on those reactionary sections to rally round the Lion of Utkala and strengthen his hands in getting back what is lost for the time being.

Despite the amalgamation of Sareikella and Kharswan in Bihar and the inability of the ministry of Mahtab to control the situation his contribution to the construction of Greater Orissa (*Brihattara Orissa*) can not be denied. His diplomacy and planning in this context may need a critical study; but the amalgamation of the other states with the small province of Orissa would remain an enduring achievement.

(IV)

A very important problem in the study of the merger of the States of Orissa is the aftermath of it. When the enthusiastic Oriyas started to observe the day of merger, there was anti-merger agitation in the States of Kalahandi, Gangpur and Bonai. Kalahandi became the most interesting site of the anti-merger agitators.[19] The agitators began to disrupt the meetings for the celebration of the occasion. According to Daily *Asha* (21st January 1948) the anti-merger groups at Bhawanipatna had organised two meetings. They even threatened to destroy the house of Rajani Kanta Das, the organising secretary of Congress in Kalahandi.[20] As Mahatma Gandhi was assassinated on 30th January 1948 many people in Kalahandi became happy and started campaigns against the merger. According to the report of

Rajani Kanta Das (the great *Prajamandal* leader of Kalahandi) this anti-merger group at Bhawanipatna was identical with royal brokers (*Rajadalal*).[21]

The anti-merger agitation gained considerable strength at the connivance of the Royalist group. As the situation aggravated seriously particularly in Kalahandi, the Government of Orissa under government Notification No.1704(e) dated the 22nd April 1948 issued under Section 6 of Orissa Maintenance of Public order Act IV of 1948 prohibited holding of public procession, meeting or assembly advocating the formation of the Union of States. In contravention to the same notification the agitators led a procession consisting of 200 persons in the town of Bhawanipatna on 25th May 1948.[22] They shouted anti-merger slogans such as "We do not want Orissa Government", "Orissa Government get out", "We want our Union of States".[23] The anti-merger group at Bhawanipatna wanted to continue the agitation. On July 16, 1948 on the occasion of *Rath Yatra* five varieties of Pro-Union leaflets were distributed among the people. Among them *Union sunischita*, *Manadei padhantu*, *Sabadhana Gadajata bhaimane* were very remarkable. This anti-merger agitation became very active in Kalahandi, but Mahtab and other great leaders with Rajanikanta Das (the organising secretary of the Congress at Kalahandi) took drastic steps to suppress the agitation. Rajanikanta Das in *Prajatantra* (9th June 1948) totally rejected the veracity of the news column on the *Adivasi problem in Kalahandi* (which included anti-merger activities) in *Samaj* (1st June 1948).

This agitation began to spread to Bonai, Gangpur and even Bamanda. At the time of merger of the States Sarangdhar Das and Malati Chaudhuri went to these areas for the propagation of merger and its utility for the people. They organised meetings for the purpose. Malati Chaudhuri was beaten by the ladies at Bamanda.[24] In Gangapur the leaders of the *Prajamandal* organisation - Natabar Pande, Sundarmani Patel and Ramacharan Patel - became pro-royalist and even accepted the stand of the anti-merger group The tribal people of Bonai also protested at the merger of the States when Gananath Das became the administrator in 1948. According to the report of Gananath Das over five hundred armed adivasis of Bonai started this movement by demanding the merger of Bonai either with Bihar or with Jharkhand.[25] Due to the wise step of Gananath Das and the efforts of local leaders like Bhajan Mahato and Chiranjilal Sharma the situation could be brought under control.

The anti-merger movement as well as the desire of some Chiefs for the formation of Eastern States Union were inevitable because the chiefs and some self-seeking people saw in the merger the loss of their identity. The attitude of many *Prajamandal* leaders needed to be studied at the merger table. The administration of the States after merger became the key discussion. The relation between the administration and the public opinion in the States was not clear due to merger. The members of the Advisory Committee of the States were the former *Prajamandal* workers and they could not read the sentiment of the people and consequently some administrative problems appeared.

In 1948 after merger Godavarish Mahapatra wrote a poem entitled as *Miss Odisa* where he became very critical of the New Administration.[26] In another issue of *Niakhunta* the post-merger scene was mocked at and a short poem was published there which the editor Godavarish Mahapatra called as *Manyabara Mahatabanka Puja abhivadana* (the Puja greetings of Mahtab).[27]

The poem runs like this -----

Ṭam ṭam ṭam ṭamaka vāje   Chhoṭiā Oḍiśā virāṭa sāje
Jāi Kharaswān Saḍheikalā   Tathāpi Oḍiśā viśala helā
Karāpuṭa pare Āndhra ḍāka   Chamaka delāṇi Oḍiśā jāka
Vajā ṭamaka vajāya bājā   Mukuṭavihina Oḍiśā Rājā
Ṭamaka māḍare duluke chhāti   Behosa helā ki Oḍiā jāti?
Epaṭa galāṇi sepaṭa jiva   Tathāpi Oḍiśā virāṭa heva

The merger of the States of Orissa with the province of Orissa was necessary economically, socially and culturally. This event articulated the economic, cultural and social identity of the Oriyas. It is true that many Oriya-speaking areas could not be amalgamated with Orissa and even after merger of Sareikalla and Kharswan, two Oriya-speaking areas of Singhbhum were added to Bihar much against the wish of the Oriyas, but this amalgamation was the most interesting stage of the construction and the legitimation of Oriya identity. Despite all exclusions this was Greater Orissa which was the demand of the Oriya nationalists for half a century.

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1. An interesting analysis of this situation in the Indian context has been provided by Ian Copland. See Ian Copland, *The Princes of India in the endgame of Empire 1917-1947*, Cambridge University Press, 1997.

2. L.E.B. Cobden Ramsay, *Feudatory States of Orissa*, Howrah, 1950, p.1.

3. This letter was incorporated in the booklet of the Utkala Sammilani Sabha (12th session) at Balasore in 1916.

4. Sachi Routray, *Miss Odisa*, 1936, *Nabeen*, 1-4-1936, p.9.

   Rani Saheba of Dhenkanal in the prize giving ceremony at Ravenshaw Collegiate School, Cuttack presented an interesting speech in which she emphasised co-operation between British Orissa and Princely Orissa. According to her view this collaboration would help in the all round progress of the greater and united Orissa. Appreciating her view, the editor of *Asha* stated that as long as both the British Orissa and the Princely Orissa were not united, Oriyas would not be accepted as belonging to one *Jati*. To forget this is a type of self-deception (*atma-pratarana*). See *Asha*, 25th April, 1938.

5. For an intensive study on the awakening in the States of Orissa see

   i) Sadasiva Pradhan, *Agrarian and Political_Movements : States of Orissa*, New Delhi, 1986

   ii) Satyabhama Pati, *Democratic Movements in India*, New Delhi, 1987.

iii) Bijay Chandra Rath, *Unrest in Princely States of Orissa : Dhenkanal and Talcher (1938-1947)*, Cuttack, 1993.

iv) J.K. Samal, *Princely States of Orissa (1905-1947)*, Allahabad, 1988.

6. Barbara N. Ramusack, "Congress and the people's movement in Princely India : Ambivalence in strategy and Organization", in *Congress and Indian Nationalism The pre-Independence phase*, ed. R. Sisson and S. Wolpert, University of Califernia Press, Berkeley, 1988, p.377-403.

7. See No.5.

Biswamoy Pati, *Resisting Domination Peasants, tribals and the National Movement in Orissa 1920-50*, New Delhi 1993.

Chandi Prasad Nanda, *Towards Swaraj, Nationalist politics and popular Movements in Orissa*, New Delhi, 1998.

8. Harekrushna Mahtab, "A reply to Sri Ronendra Pratap Singh Deo, Cancellation of Sanads ", *Modern Review*, January, 1940, p.66-67.

9. *Modern Review*, November, 1939.

10. K.C. Panigrahi, *Political status of the feudatory_States of Orissa and Chhatisgarh*, Cuttack.

11. Bijay Chandra Rath, *op.cit.*, p.288.

12. *Ibid.*

13. *Ibid.*

14. *Ibid*, p.289.

15. *Ibid.*

16. The Oriya newspapers like *Nabeen* gave good focus to this issue.

17. Harekrushna Mahtab, *Beginning of the end*, Book Company, Calcutta, Appendix-XXVI; Also see Historical Facts, Supplement to the Samaj on the occasion of the celebration of golden jubilee of the formation of the separate province of Orissa, Cuttack, April 1,1987, p.54-59.

18. Harekrushna Mahtab, secret and confidential Do No 1672 (100) to Rajani Kanta Das, Kalahandi. I am grateful to Rajani Kanta Das for this report. It is now preserved in the Regional record centre, National Archives, Bhubaneswar.

19. For an interesting account of the anti-merger agitation in Kalahandi see Satyabhama Pati, *op.cit.* p.215-216.

    Prasanna Kumar Mishra, "Mahtab, merger and the Maharajas", Orissa History Congress, proceeding of the XV Annual Session, 1989, p.254-261.

20. *Daily Asha*, 21.2.1948; *Krishak*, 24.1.1948; *Prajatantra*, 25.1.1948.

21. *Prajatantra*, 21.3.1948.

22. Satyabhama Pati, *op. cit.*, p.215-216.

23. *Ibid*

24. Information kindly collected from Dhananjaya Mahanty, Sundargarh.

25. *Panchajanya* (Oriya quarterly magazine), ed. D.C.Kuanr, 10th Year, 3rd number, 1989.

26. Miss Odisa, 1948, *Niakhunta*, ed. Godavarish Mahapatra, 9th year, 9th number, 1948.

27. *Niakhunta*, October 1948. p.1. The song in Oriya is as follows :

ଟମ ଟମ ଟମ ଟମକ ବାଜେ ଛୋଟିଆ ଓଡ଼ିଶା ବିରାଟ ସାଜେ ।
ଯାଉ ଖରସୁଆଁ ଷଢେଇକଳା ତଥାପି ଓଡ଼ିଶା ବିଶାଳ ହେଲା ।
କରାପୁଟ ପରେ ଆନ୍ଧ୍ର ଡାକ ଟମକ ଦେଇଣି ଓଡ଼ିଶା ଯାକ ।
ବଜା ଟମକ ବଜାଅ ବାଜା ମୁକୁଟ ବିହୀନ ଓଡ଼ିଶା ରାଜା ।
ଟମକ ମାଡ଼ରେ ଦୁଲୁକେ ଛାତି ବେହୋସ ହେଇଛି ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଜାତି ?
ଏ ପଟ ଗଲାଣି ସେପଟ ଯିବ ତଥାପି ଓଡ଼ିଶା ବିରାଟ ହେବ ।

11

INTEGRATION OF THE PRINCELY STATES OF ORISSA: THE MERGER CONFERENCE

Satyabhama Pati

Merger of the princely States with the province of Orissa was a brain child of Harekrushna Mahtab. In the thirties of the 20th Century a report as per the plan of Mahtab was submitted to Lord Linlithgow, Viceroy of India. But due to the outbreak of Second World War and subsequent resignation of the Congress ministry all over the Indian provinces the plan for merger of the States was kept in abeyance. Soon after the War, Mahtab who claimed to have been the author of an idea and principle of merger of States, took up the matter with the Cabinet Mission, and had made a long discussion with the States Ministry of Government of India of exclusively with Sardar Patel and V.P. Menon. He submitted a memorandum written by Sri B.K. Pal, Advocate, to the Cabinet Mission. The Provincial Congress Committee published the said memorandum. The Cabinet Mission, besides being sympathetic, was deeply impressed. Sir Stafford Cripps put pressure on Sir Conrad Carfield, Political Advisor to H.E. the Crown Representative. Mahtab had several interviews with him. Yet it bore no fruit. Realising the fact that

the Political Department and the rulers of the Princely States were manoeuvring at the back to frustrate the merger issue, Mahtab continued his efforts in impressing upon the Viceroy of India by his logical arguments. On the other side, the rulers submitted memoranda to the Political Department contesting the plan of Mahtab. Such a situation compelled Mahtab to start negotiation and seek for mutual agreement with the rulers for their cooperation in his endeavour. But no tangible result came out soon.

As independence of India was nearing there were mixed reactions among the States people and the rulers. The rulers were trying hard to get together and to form unions and maintain their Sovereignty, while the States people were striving for representative governments under their respective rulers. Jawaharlal Nehru was also in favour of the people's choice, but later on, convinced by Mahtab, changed his views in regard to the future of the states. The All India States People's Conference lent support to the promotion of Union of States. Mahtab left no stones unturned to get the things done. The rulers, on the other hand, moving in a different direction, formed the Eastern States Union and got it approved by the All India States People's Conference. This was a bolt from the blue. All the moves of Mahtab were thus foiled. Even Mahtab was seriously criticised by P.H. Krishna Rao, Prime Minister of Eastern States Union. At last he was cut to size of a desperate figure in the Orissa States Politics.

After the formation of States Department and Sardar Patel was put in charge of it with V.P. Menon as the Secretary, Mahtab

submitted a memorandum regarding merger of the States. Sardar Patel was apprised of the counter move of the ruling chiefs. The intrigues of some of the officers of the Political Department with regard to the States, the plan of grouping together the Eastern States and Hyderabad to make a strong unit to withstand any kind of pressure from Independent India, and Bastar State being the connecting link between them, disturbed very much Sardar Patel. Fortunately, to overcome this difficulty, Nilgiri showed the way.

Affairs in the princely state of Nilgiri went beyond control due to maladministration, anarchy caused by the adivasis and encouragement to harass the *Prajamandal* leaders. Mahtab reacted thus: "It was not safe to allow lawlessness to prevail in a neighbouring area in the interest of administration of the province itself". He with the permission of Sardar Patel took over the administration of Nilgiri on 14 November 1947 for which act Patel was blamed more as it was a sort of 'Coup-de-etat'. Of course, Mahtab had his arguments in his defence; more so he boasted that it was just the beginning. On the other side, the way in which Nilgiri was taken over, created a flutter amongst the rulers of the 'Eastern States'. Nilgiri, however, was administered as an occupied territory of the Government of Orissa till 1 January 1948 when the occupation was legalised as merger.

In the meanwhile Sardar Patel and V.P. Menon had drawn up 'a plan of taking some subjects of the Princely States by the province and leaving some to the princes'. In other words, "a plan was made for forming Unions of States in order to make a viable province to be democratically administered by the Princes". But Mahtab opposed that idea and convinced

Jawaharlal Nehru and Sardar Patel and got their approval to go his own way i.e. complete merger of the states with the province. He made all arrangements, both police and vigilance, invited Sardar Patel to Cuttack and showed him his plan of merger. The earlier plan of merger prepared by V.P. Menon was scrapped, which was of course, kept secret to the princes. Mahtab was determined and with a strong attitude took a firm stand to achieve his goal.

On 16 November 1947 invitations were sent to all the B and C class rulers to attend a conference on 14 December 1947 at the Government House, Cuttack regarding merger of their States. Arrangements of accommodation for their stay at Cuttack were also made. Similarly A class rulers of Orissa were invited to a separate conference at the Government House, Cuttack on 14 December 1947 in the afternoon. The Regional Commissioner of Orissa States was asked to bring with him the Sanads of the Orissa Feudatory States, which might be required for the purpose. Although Mayurbhanj is an Oriya speaking State, its ruler was at first not invited to attend the conference.

Sardar Patel would leave for Cuttack on 13 December 1947 by aeroplane and would be accompanied by his Ministry Secretary (Mr. Menon), his Private Secretary and one or two others. He would discuss matter with the Premier and the Governor of Orissa on 13th afternoon and would meet the B and C class rulers on 14th and finalise issues on that itself. He would return on 15th, if possible.

The Princes on invitation assembled at Cuttack. First of all, as per the plans and programme, a meeting with the B and C

class rulers was held in Government House, Cuttack on 14 December 1947 at 10 a.m. under the Chairmanship of Sardar Vallabh Bhai Patel, Deputy Prime Minister of India. The conference was attended by the following twelve B and C class rulers.

1. *Raja Brajendra Chandra SinghDeo Brajendra Narendra Mohapatra* with *Sreemati Basanta Manjari Devi* (*Rajmata*) of Ranpur;
2. *Raja Sriram Chandra Singh Deo* of Kharasawan;
3. *Raja Harihar Singh Mardaraj Bhramarbar Ray* of Khandapara;
4. *Raja Narayan Chandra Birbar Mangaraj Mohapatra* of Baramba;
5. *Raja Bahadur Ananta Narayan Mansingh Harichandan Mohapatra* of Narasinghpur;
6. *Raja Bahadur Nabakishore Chandra Mardaraj Jagdeb* of Hindol;
7. *Raja SreeKaran Radhanath Bebarta Patnaik* of Athgarh;
8. *Raja Sarat Chandra Munipal* of Pa-Lahara;
9. *Raja Bir Chandra Jadumani Deo Jenamani* of Rairakhol;
10. *Raja Kishore Chandra Mardaraj Harichandan* of Nilgiri;
11. *Raja Bahadur Kishore Chandra Deo Bhanja* of Daspalla;
12. *Raja Hrudaya Chandra Deo Birbar Harichandan* of Talcher.

Besides the above mentioned rulers the following were also present in the meeting :

1. The Hon'ble Sardar Vallabh Bhai Patel, Deputy Prime Minister of India.
2. H.K. Mahtab, Premier of Orissa.
3. V.P. Menon, CSI, CIE, Secretary, Ministry of States, Government of India.
4. K.V.K. Sundaram, ICS, Secretary, Ministry of Law, Government of India.
5. V. Shankar, ICS, Private Secretary to the Hon'ble Minister of States.
6. Regional Commissioner for the Eastern States, Sambalpur.
7. Mr. N. Senapati, ICS, Revenue Commissioner, Orissa.
8. B.C. Mukherjee, ICS, Chief Secretary to the Government of Orissa.

The minutes of the meeting were thus briefed;

At the outset Sardar Patel stated that the reason for inviting the rulers of Orissa States was the growing discontent among the people which had created a pressing problem demanding immediate solution as the safety of rulers and the people was in danger. He pointed out that during the last two months reports were pouring in confirming disturbed conditions in the small States bordering Orissa province. It was recently that the storm had broken out in Nilgiri when adibasis invited by Communists and probably by the ruler himself to create split

among the workers, brought about an anarchy which compelled the Dominion Government to ask the Government of Orissa to take over the administration of that State. All these developments, pointed out by the Hon'ble Minister for States, had brought him to Cuttack to tender friendly advice to the rulers not as a representative of a foreign power or a representative of the old Paramountcy which had disappeared but as a member of one family trying to solve a family problem.

Free India had to plan the progress of every Federal Unit and Orissa free from all problems, communist or communal, was ready to march on the path of economic advancement particularly as its social fabric had not been disturbed by any communal animosities. The problem of the province, however, which was holding up its legitimate right to progress was the problem of a number of petty States left as a legacy of British rule - which cut across the province and ruined its unity. Orissa as a Federal unit could only thrive and progress if it was built as a contiguous whole and not torn asunder by multi-farious jurisdictions and authorities which ruined its compactness. These States, therefore, which had no resources, no man power and nothing on which any stable government could be built up, could not work as a responsible government. There had been, of late, a parrot cry for responsible government in States in India and some rulers had used one section of the population against the other to maintain their position. Responsible government in petty States like Nilgiri, observed Sardar Patel, had no meaning. In the circumstances, if Orissa Government suggested merger of the States in the province it was not with any selfish motive to

swallow all states but it was designed in the best interests of the people of the States and the province as both were determined to march rapidly on the path of progress. The position, therefore, as the Deputy Prime Minister visualised was that the people agitating fast would not allow rulers to remain whereas responsible government in small States defeated its own purpose with the inevitable result that it was in the interests of the rulers and of the people to hand over the administration to the well established running machine of Cuttack. There were few States being enough to maintain provincial standards and if that standard was not possible in a certain State it was necessary to evolve a scheme which would maintain that standard. The late Political Department started a Union of the Eastern States and transferred the police to the rulers but it had now been clearly shown that the police was ineffective and its loyalty was doubtful. The police had Pathans and Pakisthan Muslims and their use was bound to produce frightful repercussion everywhere. The best that the Union could do was to hand over the police to the Orissa Government. As the States also could not have a High Court or could establish hospitals and build educational system which the Government of Orissa could do, it was in the interest of all concerned to establish a joint united administration. The friendly advice, said the Hon'ble Minister for States, which could be given to the rulers was to get behind the wall of safety by divesting themselves of all responsibility and thereby ceasing to be the first target in troubled times. If the rulers transferred their powers to a responsible Government like Orissa they would be fully discharging their responsibility to

their subjects and the Government of India would in turn be interested in guaranteeing privileges, honour, dignity and happiness of such rulers. The Deputy Prime Minister assured the rulers that their Privy Purse would be guaranteed for all times. The Government of India had considered this question at great length and came to the conclusion that the only solution for the small States in Orissa was a merger with the province. This plan of merger, continued the Deputy Prime Minister, was intended to secure for the Rulers a fixed share of income and this advice was being tendered because the Government of India had an interest in them to see that no harm came to them and also to ensure that no harm came to the interest that was entrusted to the rulers as trustees. Sardar Patel therefore said that he genuinely tendered this advice as a sincere friend that merger was the best solution. As merger would need legislation it was proposed that during the interim period a condition could be brought about for working common administration with Orissa which would enable the province to progress. It was the sincere desire of the Government of India to see this province which was one of the richest in mineral resources, developed without delay as other provinces were at present disturbed by internal problems. If this advice was not listened to, the Deputy Prime Minister felt that the princes would soon have to come to Delhi after being chased by their people and he might then not be in a position to help them as things might have gone too far.

Sardar Patel then asked the rulers to suggest any alternative which would be acceptable and if they had none they should accept his advice as he had come to Cuttack to discharge

his responsibility as a friend above all to help the rulers and he would be prepared to answer questions and to remove doubts.

The ruler of Ranpur stated that he had granted responsible government in his state and if his state was merged in Orissa his people might say that the ruler had betrayed the people and sold them to Orissa Government. He felt that there could be an alternative to merger which would be a Union of States. If there was merger he felt that the people might later stop the Privy Purse as there would be no use left for the Ruler.

The Deputy Prime Minister pointed out that Ranpur was so small and the people so turbulent that they had once gone to the extent of murdering a Political Officer like Bazalgette and that the conclusion to be drawn was that the people would not allow the ruler to continue administration in his State. Further, to give responsible government in Ranpur would be a mockery and the answer, therefore, was to entrust the responsibility to one who could discharge it and the Orissa Government was ready and competent to do so.

The ruler of Ranpur wanted to know if he would be entitled to stand for the Cuttack Legislature. The Deputy Prime Minister replied that certainly as a citizen of Orissa he would be blessed with that right. Instead of diving in a narrow well the ruler would be entitled to dive in an ocean. The ruler of Baramba said that the people were insulting and abusing the officers as well as rulers when everything possible was done to please them. The Minister for States replied that the very reason which had brought him to Cuttack was the trouble which the ruler had

mentioned. 'Why stick to the burden which weighs, down and makes the rulers helpless was the question'. The ruler of Baramba desired that the decision to maintain the ancient dignities, privileges and Privy Purse of the ruler must be guaranteed for all times and be settled in writing and also wanted to know the scale of the Privy Purse which was to the granted to the rulers. V.P.Menon replied that the Privy Purse would be dependent on the income of the state and that the Year 1945-46 would be taken as the basic year for calculating the Privy Purse. The intention in taking 1945-46 as a basis was that in majority of cases it was the peak year of revenue. The scale fixed by the Government of India was 15% for the first lakh of revenue and 10% for 2.5 lakhs of revenue and 7.5% for revenue above 5 lakhs. The ruler of Baramba requested that the Privy Purse was very meagre in case of small States which had a low revenue below 5 lakhs as the first slab of 15% ending with 1 lakh only. He appealed for its increase. The Deputy Prime Minister assured that as the Privy Purse was being fixed in perpetuity and dynastic succession guaranteed he would have to justify before the Constituent Assembly the figure which he was proposing to the rulers. In the circumstances he could not offer anything which would make the Privy Purse a target of attack and bring bad name to the rulers.

The ruler of Baramba wanted an assurance that the *Debottar* grants as well as religious ceremonies on *Dussarah* and other occasions would be maintained and the Provincial Government would arrange for the worship of the family temples and deities of the State as before. The Prime Minister of Orissa

assured the rulers that as they were all Hindus they would respect all grants made to temples and *Debottar* property would be considered sacred. The temples would certainly be maintained by Provincial Government and the worship continued as before. The ruler of Kharsawan explained that his State was surrounded by the Singhbhum district of Bihar and the adibasis wanted him to merge into that Province. He had recently received a telegram from the *Praja Mandal* threatening and demanding responsible government within 24 hours. Menon explained that as an immediate solution the rulers should sign the agreement conceding powers, authority and jurisdiction to the Government of Orissa. If necessary a plebiscite could be taken later and the wishes of the people be ascertained as regards the merger of that state into Bihar or Orissa.

The rulers generally wanted a guarantee that the Privy Purse would be given in perpetuity and their dynastic succession fully protected and assured in writing.

The Deputy Prime Minister explained that the present agreement which the rulers were to sign visualised an interim arrangement for bringing about common administration which Orissa Province and the perpetual guarantee of Privy Purse, dynastic succession, privileges and dignities embodied in the agreement would also have to be incorporated in the future constitution of India and thus brought on a permanent basis. As regards complete merger which would need legislation the rulers would be consulted as to the shape which the integration would take when the constitution of the province was forged.

The Rulers of B and C Class states requested for some time to consider the agreement and it was decided that they would meet the same evening at 6 P.M. to sign the agreement. A meeting was accordingly convened at 6 P.M. presided over by V.P. Menon and all the rulers except those of Bonai, Athmallik and Tigiria signed the agreement, their Privy Purse being fixed on the basis of 1945-46 income and in accordance with the scale mentioned by the Secretary, Ministry of States, a copy of the agreement duly signed by the Secretary and executed by the rulers was returned back to the latter It was decided to ask the rulers of the remaining 3 states, namely, Bonai, Athmallik and Tigiria who could not be present owing to illness or other reasons to sign the agreement later.

Another meeting was held in the Government House, Cuttack at 2.30 P.M. on 14 December 1947 to which the A Class rulers were invited. Sardar Vallabh Bhai Patel presided and others who were in the meeting of the B and C Class rulers, also remained present. The following A Class rulers attended the meeting.

1. Flt. Lt. His Highness ***Maharaja Sir Pratap Chandra Bhanj Deo***, K.C.I.E, *Maharaja* of Mayurbhanj.

2. His Highness ***Maharaja R.N. Singh Deo***, KCIE, *Maharaja* of Patna.

3. His Highness ***Maharaja Pratap Kesari Deo***, *Maharaja* of Kalahandi.

4. His Highness ***Maharaja Sudhansu Sekhar Singh Deo***, *Maharaja* of Sonepur.

5. ***Raja Narayan Prasad Dev***, CBE, Ruler of Boudh.
6. His Highness ***Maharaja Sankar Pratap Singh Deo Mahindra Bahadur***, ruler of Dhenkanal.
7. ***Raja Bir Udit Pratap Sekhar Deo***, ruler of Gangpur.
8. Brother of the ruler of Nayagarh.
9. ***Raja Aditya Pratap Singh Deo***, ruler of Sareikalla.
10. ***Raja Shree Balabhadra Narayan Bhanj Deo***, ruler of Keonjhar.
11. ***Raja Bhanuganga Tribhuban Deb***, ruler of Bamara.

In his inaugural speech the Deputy Prime Minister of India stated that for sometime past he had been receiving reports from princes, people and the Central Intelligence that conditions in Eastern States were unsteady and giving cause for anxiety. The Dominion Government was vitally concerned in the rapid development of Orissa into a model province with its rich mineral resources but this could not be achieved owing to the problem created by the Orissa states which interwined and broke the administrative unity and contiguity of the province. The Government of India had reason to believe that the conditions prevailing in Nilgiri and Kharswan prevailed in other states also. The problem of communism and of aboriginals could best be tackled by a strong government of the type which the province of Orissa could provide. The Deputy Prime Minister pointed out that he had tendered friendly advice to the B, C and A Class rulers and suggested that in the interests of Greater India one could not allow to waste the wealth and resources of the tract which now

comprised the states and the province of Orissa and hence integration of A class states with province was clearly indicated. There was for example the Hirakud Scheme which could not be worked without the cooperation of the adjoining A class states. He explained at great length that he had not come to Cuttack as a representative of a foreign government and it was not his intention to establish Paramountcy which had died with the British rule in India. The Dominion Government appreciated the rights of rulers who had acquired by their ancient dignity and history certain claims on the people which the latter must honour. The Government of India would therefore guarantee the dignities, privileges and dynastic succession as well as a reasonable Privy Purse to rulers who felt that on account of agitation in their states they could not maintain their administration and in the larger interests of the country were prepared to take part in the building of a wealthy United Orissa. It was unfortunate, went on the Deputy Prime minister, but everyone realised that the Orissa states were like ulcers on the body of Orissa Province and they had to be either cured or eliminated. If the rulers listened to the Hon'ble Minister's advice they could be cured else they may find themselves uprooted by the people. In the constitutional tangle the princes blamed the people as being unfit and the people in turn abused the ruler as being unfit with the inevitable result that as Orissa Government was fit, responsible and ready. Power should be transfered to this well established concern which would guarantee the rule of law and ensure happiness of the people. There was no compulsion on any one and the intention of the meeting was to discuss this important problem as an internal

family matter and to arrive at a friendly solution. Sardar Patel felt that the cause of merger which was proposed to B and C Class rulers was the best plan he could suggest. As merger would need legislation it was proposed that the rulers should sign now an agreement by which they would cede all powers, jurisdiction and authority to the Government of India which in turn would delegate the same to the Provincial Government and thus a common administrative machine would be provided for the Oriya speaking population of this part of India. Patel appealed to the rulers to consider this question in the greater interest of India and if there were any question to be asked he would be willing to answer.

Maharaja of Patna stated that the rulers were willing to consider all reasonable schemes which would bring about peaceful constitutional progress of the states. He said that the rulers had met at Calcutta and expected this conference to consider subjects of common concern with Orissa. As far as collaboration with the neighbouring provinces was concerned all recognised that it was imperative. The *Maharaja* felt that it was necessary to obtain an overall picture of the scheme before it was possible to come to any decision. The suggestion of merger was not considered by them so far though he pointed out that rulers were considering various means of integration and collaboration with the province.

The Deputy Prime Minister explained that one uniform administration was needed in this area under one strong government which would provide security and thereby enable rapid progress to be made. There was no question of merger

immediately as that would take time and needed legislation. There was no objection to alternative schemes being put forward but the intention was that the Government of India would guarantee rulers' dignity, dynastic succession, Privy Purse and privileges and the rulers would in turn be well advised to shake off the responsibility for the administration of their states and thereby cease to be the target of attack. There was the example of the Deccan States Union, for in the beginning they all wanted to remain aloof from the Bombay province but then some of them had realised the compelling force of events and were keen on a complete merger with the neighbouring province of Bombay.

The *Maharaja* of Patna expressed his desire to take a picture of what was to be done and how the scheme of common administration was intended to run. V.P. Menon explained that common administration could only be provided if the Government of Orissa were allowed to take over the entire charge of the administration of the states concerned. The *Maharaja* suggested that scheme alternative to merger should be considered and autonomy to some extent must be retained in the states. There was no objection to common arrangement with the province on important subjects but for less important subjects the states should be brought to work their autonomy. The Deputy Prime Minister replied that the people in states were not advanced enough to wield any power and they could only be expected to create trouble and to lower the efficiency of the administration with the result that local autonomy would not work. He therefore felt that if the rulers had to part with power they should part it to the running machine of the province of Orissa. *Maharaja* of

Patna explained that several states had made declarations granting responsible government and the people would chastise the rulers if without consulting them the states were merged. The Hon'ble Minister for States pointed out that the minds of the people were best known to the Government of India and to the National leaders who were in the closest touch with all popular currents.

The *Maharaja* of Patna desired to know if the territorial integrity of the states would be preserved when they integrated with the province of Orissa. K. Sunderam, Secretary to Law Ministry, replied that the territorial integrity would be maintained during the interim management but it could not be said what shape it would take when legislation was introduced merging the states into the province. The *Maharaja* enquired how the people of the states would be represented during the interim period and the Deputy Prime Minister answered to this that the intention was to have a States Advisory Council and further every effort would be made to evolve a machinery by which the people of the states would get a voice in the administration. For example there was a proposal for an Upper House in C.P. and the rulers were to be given representation therein. The Hon'ble Minister pointed out that such a possibility could certainly be considered. He also stated in reply to a question from the *Maharaja of Patna* that the Government of India would guarantee dynastic succession according to Hindu Law and Custom.

The Patna *Maharaja* further desired to know about the Privy Purse that would be allowed to the rulers. The Minister for States replied that a scale had been fixed for B and C class rulers and it was interded to apply the same to A class rulers as the

revenue of A class States was larger than that of B and C and there could be no justification for giving to A class rulers a scale more liberal than that was provided for B and C. The *Maharaja* of Patna suggested that the Privy Pruse provided by the Chamber of Princes or the Deccan States Constitution should be accepted as the scale proposed by the Government of India for B and C Class rulers was definitely inadequate. V.P. Menon explained that the scale provided for B and C Class rulers was a modification of the provision made by the Deccan States and that it was not possible to increase the same as the B and C Class rulers had accepted the scale fixed by the Deputy Prime Minister and there was no justification for liberalising the scale for A class rulers whose income was higher than that of B and C. The basic year on which the Privy Purse was to be calculated would be 1945-46. Some rulers suggested that an average of last three years should be taken inclusive of 1946-47 but it was felt that the peak year was 1945-46 and further as figures for 1946-47 were not available in all cases it was decided to regard 1945-46 as the basic year.

The *Maharaja* of Patna enquired if the Privy Purse would cover family allowance and if the Civil List Reserve Fund be treated as private property, Menon explained that the burden on the Privy Purse would include marriage ceremonies as well as allowances to members of the family and that though annual contributions to the Civil List Reserve Fund would cease the fund as such would be treated as Private Property. Again the palace would be treated as private property including movables like jewellery,silver articles,cars etc. The privileges and immunities

of rulers relating to exemption from Arms Licences etc. would certainly continue. The *Maharaja* of Kalahandi wanted to know as to what would happen to any private immovable property of the ruler e.g. the villages and land as well as buildings. Menon explained that all such private property should be declared by the 1st January and the Government of India would willingly accept as private property, houses belonging to the rulers outside the state as well as villages and lands and palace in the state and also the present property of the ruler. The *Maharaja* of Patna requested that palace grounds should be measured which remained a matter for the provincial Government to consider. H.K. Mahtab, Premier of Orissa,promised to maintain palace grounds for the dignity and protection of rulers. The *Maharaja* further requested the provincial Government to accept the provision made for the Deccan States' Constitution which provided for 24 constables as guard and one officer for the ruler. The Premier of Orissa pointed out that it was not possible to guarantee the number of constables and officers, but a reasonable number would be provided and the palace guards would be maintained. The *Maharaja* further requested that the Paramount Services in the states must be allowed to continue and at all events there should be no victimisation. Menon and the Premier of Orissa both assured this and as far as possible efforts would be made to absorb the existing staff. The *Maharaja* of Patna further wanted to know if the existing state servants would be offered terms not less favourable than the present and if removed, would be compensated. Menon explained that efforts would be made to absorb the existing staff and they would be offered terms and

conditions which prevailed in the province of Orissa. If state servants had to be removed or were not wanted through no fault of their own, and if a case was made out it may be possible to pay compensation in reasonable cases. The *Maharaja* of Patna enquired if the Forest and Agricultural Schools, the Forest Advisory Staff and the High Court Judges would be taken over by the Orissa Government. The Premier of Orissa replied that he could possibly absorb the Forest Staff and the Schools but it would be difficult to say anything definite about the Union High Court Judges. In any case the question of employment of staff would be sympathetically examined in every respect.

Lastly, the *Maharaja* desired that the guarantee regarding privileges and exemptions should be clarified in detail and put in writing to which Menon replied that he would always be prepared to correspond on the subject and confirm and clear up doubts relating to such rights and privileges. He said, if the rulers were willing to sign the agreement such a letter could be issued the next morning. The *Maharaja* of Patna explained that he could not communicate his decision straightway and would keep an open mind to the proposal peaced before the rulers. In the draft agreement there were several points which needed clarification and consultation with the Constitutional Advisors of the rulers.

The Deputy Prime Minister enquired what was meant by keeping an open mind because it looked as if the rulers did not wish to sign the agreement. The *Maharaja* of Patna requested that signing the agreement meant taking a decisive step and it was necessary to have time to consider the implications of what the rulers proposed to do. The Minister for States said that the draft

was a simple proposition and it could be examined forthwith and a definite reply could be given without unnecessary delay. The *Maharaja* of Mayurbhanj said that as he had established responsible government in his state and a Ministry was functioning he could not make any final contract but that the Premier of Mayurbhanj would certainly discuss the matter with the Hon'ble Premier of Orissa and decide.

Sardar Patel stated that if any individual ruler wished to sign he could do so and the *Maharaja* of Patna explained that the rulers were not rejecting the offer but while conceding the principle they only requested for time to consider the draft as they felt it was necessary to take legal advice. He said that if the agreement was not signed that very day it should not be taken as finally rejected. The *Raja* of Sareikalla requested that there should be truce in the interim period and agitation in states should stop. The Deputy Prime Minister explained that if the solution which he had suggested and the friendly advice which he had tendered were not acceptable the problem remained as before and he could not guarantee what would happen. Menon suggested that the rulers could consider the agreement for a couple of hours and a further meeting could be held at 10 P.M.

The adjourned meeting was held at 10.30 P.M. the same day under the presidentship of V.P.Menon and the meeting was attended by only eight A class rulers such as Boudh, Dhenkanal, Gangpur, Kalahandi, Patna, Sonepur, Sareikalla and Bamra. The *Maharaja* of Patna pointed out that the Agreement signed by B and C class rulers did not tally with the talks in Delhi to which Menon replied that mere collaboration on 5 or 6 subjects which

was discussed in Delhi did not go far enough and integration appeared essential in the case of Orissa States. The Patna *Maharaja* then proposed that there should be a Federation of States with the province on certain subjects and that the States should retain less important subjects and in that sphere would become autonomous units. Menon further pointed out that the latest proposals of the Government of India were those of integration and that it would not be possible to distinguish between A, B and C Class States. In any case there was no compulsion and if the rulers did not wish to sign they need not do so. The *Maharaja* made a further plea that the Privy Purse was insufficient and inadequate. Menon replied that the Government of India had taken the peak year of the inflation period as the basis for calculating the perpetuity; it was not possible to increase. The *Maharaja* explained that as the rulers were signatories to the Eastern States Union Constitution it was obviously necessary for them to examine the legal position as to how best they could withdraw from it and sign the agreement offered by the Government of India. He, therefore, requested for time and the meeting was again adjourned.

The following morning (15 December 1947), the *Maharaja* of Patna saw V.P. Menon and asked for clarification of certain matters relating to rights and privileges of the rulers and principles governing classification of personal property. Menon answered in writing the points raised by the *Maharaja*. The *Maharaja* then expressed his willingness to sign the agreement provided the Preamble relating to complete merger was deleted. This was agreed to and the *Maharaja* accordingly signed the

agreement. Subsequently the rulers of Sareikalla, Sonepur, Dhenkanal, Boudh, Gangpur and Kalahandi came up and signed the agreement before V.P.Menon.

The merger in fact did not pass through a smooth process. Its procedure brought about mixed reactions in different circles. Even there occurred anti-merger agitation in some of the princelystates of Western Orissa. Sardar Patel in defence opined that in such circumstances and after careful and anxious thought, for the smaller states there was no alternative to integration. Although neither the representatives of the people of the states nor the *Prajamandal* Ministries were invited to the merger conference, the decision of merger was negotiated between the Government of Orissa and the Ruling Chiefs, and in the schemes of things it was not perhaps considered expedient to consult the *Prajamandals*. Still the attitude of not consulting the people even when major political decisions were taken, was detrimental to the democratic practice.

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12

SOVEREIGNTY, PURSE, PRIVILEGE AND MERGER OF THE PRINCELY STATES OF ORISSA

Avaya Kumar Behera

The end of the Crown-States relationship, as per the Cabinet Mission Plan, would lead to the automatic lapse of the British Paramountcy over the Princely States of India. The political and administrative vacuum caused by lapse would be 'filled by the States entering into a federal relationship with the successor Government or Governments in British India or by entering into particular political arrangements with it or them.'[1] The concept- paramountcy neither be retained by the British Crown nor be transferred to the new Government - prompted the Princes to contemplate the creation of a third power either by their independent existence or by the union among the States. As a result of reversion of the rights to the States from the Paramount Power, Rulers of Hyderabad, Bhopal and Travancore

(The paper is prepared primarily on the original sources preserved in the Orissa State Archives, Bhubaneswar)

thought and acted in terms of the independence as sovereign power. On the other hand, Congress strongly repudiated the concept of the lapse of paramountcy equating with independence of the States.[2] Lapse of paramountcy had nothing to do with the relationship between the Government of India and the States.[3]

The plan of the Cabinet Mission was inconclusive for it terminated the Crown-States relationship conferring autonomy on the latter to determine the future political status. On the other, the Dominion of India was kept waiting for the decision of the States. Followed by the religious partition, the Cabinet Mission Plan, part of the 'Divide and Quit' policy, was designed for a political partition of India - the British India and the Princely India. Such a plan generated, among the Princes, the feeling of regaining the political sovereignty and that of scepticism among the British Indians as well as the *Prajamandalists*. Ultimately political sovereignty and socio-economic privileges, there of, enjoyed by the Princes, emerged as the issues standing between the Princely States and the rest of India for sometime delaying the merger.

For Indian States, political sovereignty was a myth since the revolt of 1857. The *Rajas* who resisted the British Imperialism in defence of their sovereignty were cowed down by the policy of annexation. During the post-revolt years, the rulers were deceived by the policy of cooperation which developed the concept of paramountcy out of the relationship between the British Crown and the Indian States. At last, the *Rajas* found themselves caught in the web of the paramountcy, theoretically the sovereigns but practically the subordinates. Hereafter they

were destined to be 'killed by mercy'. The sovereignty was conferred upon the States as reward for loyalty and was used as an weapon to neutralise the nationalist forces in British India.

The status of the Princes of Orissa was more deplorable. They were the ideal and faithful subordinates of the British Paramountcy[6] Basically these were mediatized and minor states,[4] and none of them enjoyed the honour of receiving a ceremonial gun salutes minimum of nine times as other 110 Princes of India.[5] Most of them were feeling assured and safe under the British Paramountcy. None had the adequate resource to defend his state from external war and from internal turmoil. The annual revenue of the most of these states fell short of the cost of the lavishly maintained royal family and court. Even if some of them were willing to invest for economic prosperity of their respective states, their resources never permitted.

Twenty six Princely States of Orissa were put under three classes, A, B and C, on the basis of their annual revenue. States of 'C' class like Tigiria, Pal-Lahara and Ranpur had the meagre annual revenue below Rs.2,00,000/- with the lowest revenue of Rs.95,000/- for Tigiria and the highest of nearly Rs2,00,000/- for Ranapur in 1945-46. Twelve 'B' Class States including Athgarh, Athmallik, Baramba, Bonai, Dasapalla, Hindol, Khandapara, Kharasawan, Narasinghpur, Nilgiri, Rairakhol and Talcher were recipients of the annual revenue varying between Rs.2,00,000/- and Rs.6,00,000/-, the lowest for Baramba and the highest for Talcher. States of 'A' class such as Bamara, Baudh, Gangapur, Dhenkanal, Kalahandi, Keonjhar, Mayurbhanj, Nayagarh, Patna, Sonepur and Seraikella had the revenue above Rs.6,00,000/- per

annum with Nayagarh receiving the lowest of Rs.6,04,000/- and Mayurbhanj the highest of Rs.41,32,000/-.[7] Tigiria, the smallest State, had an area of 46 square miles with a population of 26,000 and Mayurbhanj had the area of 4243 square miles with population of 9,90,000.[8] Even Mayurbhanj, always under the benevolent and progressive rulers, found it difficult very often to invest for material progress.[9] The funds required for the maintenance of law and order at home front and to meet the expenses of the British police employed to handle the political movements led by the *Prajamandals*, exhausted all the resources of the States. An additional provision of funds for defence against external forces would have been the burden beyond the breaking point of the economy of States. Thus, continuing popular movement and financial stringency of the States led the Enquiry Committee headed by H.K. Mahtab to recommend for the amalgamation of the Princely States with Orissa Province[10] and in 1947 the Central and Provincial Governments reiterated similar stand in favour of merger because efforts of individual State would not counter the growing political and economic stress.[11] Their survival, minus British support, had alarmed them and without the merger Central and Provincial Governments could not defend them.

Interestingly, sovereignty was not at all a primary issue discussed in the meeting of Sardar Patel with the Princes at Cuttack on 14 December 1947. The entire proceedings of the meeting revolved around dynastic succession, privy purse, privileges and dignities. The merger agreement was signed by the Princes after the assurance of Sardar Patel for the perpetual

guarantee of privy purse, privileges, dynastic succession and dignities and their incorporation in the future constitution of India.[12] Even the negotiation with the Princes of the Central Province at Nagpur on the following day proceeded same way. Many of the so called sovereigns, mostly B and C class, were helpless to tackle the political unrest in their States. By this time the administration of Nilgiri State had been taken over by the Government of Orissa from 14 November 1947 as the *Raja* expressed helplessness to devise ways and means to stop lawlessness caused by the Communists and *Adivasis*. While reading out a proclamation in public on the same day, the *Raja* confessed his inability to stamp out lawlessness and to restore order with the help of small force at his disposal.[13] The *Raja* of Baramba narrated his plight in his State to the extent of insult and abuse of the ruler and his officials by the people.[14] Sardar Patel urged the Princes for merger as the solution. He stated, "These States, which had no resources, no man power and nothing on which stable Government could be set up, could not work as responsible Government". To the question of territorial integrity raised by the Maharaja of Patna, K.V.K. Sundaram, Secretary, Ministry of Law, promptly responded with the assurance to maintain territorial integrity during the interim arrangement and the legislation for merger of the States would determine the future.

The Princes of India were well aware of their sovereign status. Some of them were feeling dejected by the concept of sovereignty that was a symbol of humiliation rather than honour. The personal correspondences of the *Maharaja* of Mayurbhanj

present a painful and agonised picture of sovereignty. He wrote to the *Maharaja* of Dungarpur on 9 May 1946, "Our authority is a farce, the real Rulers are the Residents and the Political Officers. We are puppets and tools in their hands".[15] Referring to the rank and file of the Princes, he ventilated his mind honestly to the Nawab of Bhopal on 19 May 1947, "Let us frankly admit that during the long years of British Suzerainty over Indian States, the Rulers have come to depend more and more upon the support of the Paramount Power and less and less on the support of their people".[16] He wrote, "We are nothing but anachronisms and feudalistic relics to the vast majority of our political minded countrymen. They have no sympathy for us. They feel that we are the worst type of reactionaries and had it not been for us, the British Rule would have long ago crumbled in India. There is no denying this, we have always taken a doubtful pride in having come to the rescue of the paramount power whenever it is in danger". Such feeling and observation of the *Maharaja* who had earned the love and admiration of the people as progressive and enlightened ruler, make certain points clear: first, sovereignty was undoubtedly a myth; second, the isolated and vulnerable position held by the Princes vis-a-vis the people; third, any proposition to obstruct the merger in the name of sovereignty would not be logical. The feelings of the *Maharaja* can be confirmed from the tone of the modified *sanands* granted to the Rulers of Orissa in 1937 to maintain them in the position and privileges and to liable them to obligations.

However, the Princes were left with no alternative to raising of the issue of sovereignty. Because it was the rank of a

sovereign that commanded certain exclusive privileges both social and economic. Their apprehension, partially genuine, was that merger meant the loss of sovereign status and loss of sovereignty was equated with the deprivation of the privileges. Thus, protection and continuity of such privileges was the real cause of dissension against merger. The social privileges associated with the sovereignty conferred upon the Princes an extraordinary social status and recognition that differentiated them from ordinary people. As a corollary, economic privileges vested them with the customary rights to receive the most and the best from the people and the state. On the contemporary socio-economic platform, such customary rights were signs of class privilege, an antithesis to the socialistic democracy. Their privileges based upon social oppression and economic exploitation of the mass were frontally attacked by the people who demanded nothing less than their abolition as redressal measure. Collection of taxes on ceremonial occasions of *dushera*, *sunia*, corronation day, marriage and bethi-beggaries (forced labour) were not only illegal but also the part of rulers' privilege and root of peoples' miseries sometimes crossing the limit of human ethics. In States like Dhenkanal, Nayagarh, Nilgiri and Ranpur etc., the illegal demands very often surpassed the legitimate claims. The clash between the ruler and the ruled over the issue of privilege had taken an inrevertible dimension where abolition of the Princely Order seemed the only plausible solution. Under such circumstance the merger and subsequent popular government would certainly force the rulers to surrender. Hence, the Princes wanted to maintain the feudalistic platform

only to prolong the loosing battle for some more time using sovereignty as pretext.

The Princes, therefore, adopted concerted anti-merger activities. Individually the Princes felt defenceless against the popular uprising in the States and spirit of Independence as well as democratic ideas crossing the border from the neighbouring free India. As a last resort, 39 Princes of Orissa and Chhatisgarh formed the Eastern States Union.[17] Baudh, Dasapalla, Dhenkanal, Gangapur etc. played a leading role in that anti-merger union. The Rulers of Orissa States, except Mayurbhanj, acceded to adopt the new constitution of the Union and to replace the existing common High Court by the Union High Court from 1 August 1947.[18] The Princes also contributed for the construction of the temporary capital at Raigarh with a budgetary provision of Rs.10,00,000/- as recurring expenditure . Keonjhar State paid Rs.32,152/- to the Union.[19] *Maharaja* of Patna contributed Rs.41,855/- in a crossed cheque on the Imperial Bank of India, Calcutta Branch out of his total share of Rs.83,711/-.[20] These obstructionist measures created strong resentment among the States' People and anti-Prince waves swept all the States. The Orissa and Chhatisgarh Regional Council, on 10 August 1947, condemned the formation of the Estern States Union and issued an ultimatum urging the Princes for the merger by April 1948.[21]

News of Independence was responded jubilantly by the people of the States and ceremonial preparation continued for celebration of Independence Day on 15 August 1947 in spite of doubts in mind. For the States' People, Independence did not mean only the freedom from the British Paramountcy but also

form the sovereign Princes. With the former ousted, the latter survived as the oppressive agents. The States were the creation of the British imperialism and were destined for inevitable extinction. The feeling of being the *garajati* or States' people was a stigma derogatory for any free individual and with the independent existence of the States, feeling of complete freedom, as in case of the province, would not be a reality. Freedom could only be achieved by the merger of the States with the province of Orissa, promulgation of uniform pattern of administration and abolition of separate identity of the states as well as people. Therefore, resentment against the Eastern States Union was natural and genuine.

Celebration of the Independence Day in the Princely States received heart throbbing response from the people and the Princes were forced to come in terms with the political developments. They celebrated the Day by hoisting the National Flag along with their dynastic flags, released political prisoners and even some of them declared administrative reforms. Simultaneous hoisting of both the flags implied their independent existence as separate units but not as the integral part of Dominion of India. The *Raja* of Bamra hoisted the National Flag and released 37 political prisoners.[22] *Raja* of Keonjhar celebrated the Independence Day of India as well as simultaneously promised to be a progressive and benevolent ruler by declaring himself as the principal servant of the State and protector of people. The *Rajas* of Baudh, Rairakhol, Kalahandi, Patna and Baramba celebrated the Day with great festivity. The *Raja* of Nayagarh declared the nomination of three-men Cabinet including his brother Capt. B.C.Singh to head

the popular government from 15 August 1947.[23]

Sardar Patel impressed upon the Rulers that the Government would set up States Advisory Council to evolve a machinery for representation of the States' people in administration. Accordingly, The Orissa States Advisory Committees (Regulation of Powers and Functions and Transaction of Business) Rules, 1948 was introduced by the provincial Government.[24] The Committees, one for each State, were designed to tender advice on such matters relating to the affairs of the States excluding the matters 'sub-judice' as the coordinating administrative link between the Government and the States. Merger of the States abolished the privillege of the Princes of being the sovereign of a small political unit under the British Paramountcy but conferred the right to be the part of the sovereign of India. The post-merger administrative changes allowed the Princes to hold any office under the Government of Orissa.[25]

Privy purse and privileges, two important issues, dominated the proceedings of the meeting of the *Rajas* with Sardar Patel. This meeting carried special importance because its success and failure would influence the subsequent political developments that would determine the success and failure of the infant democracy and the future of the States as well as of the people. Even the statesmanship of Sardar Patel, Deputy Prime Minister of India and diplomacy of H.K. Mahtab, the Premier of Orissa, were put to test. The B and C class Rulers had the morning meeting schedule followed by that of the A class Rulers in the afternoon. Patelji reiterated the objectives of the merger designed in the best

interests of the people of the States and the Province. These two sensitive issues were handled with utmost care to safeguard the interests of the people and to preserve the dignity of the Princes. Privy purse issue was raised by the *Raja* of Baramba for B and C class States and by the *Maharaja* of Patna for A class States from different angles. Clarifying the stand of the Government of India, V.P. Menon, Secretary, Ministry of States, explained that privy purse would be settled on annual revenue of the States taking 1945-46 as the base year, the peak year of revenue in majority of States and as the figures for 1946-47 were not available in all cases.[26] "The scale fixed by the Government of India was 15 per cent for the first lakh of revenue and 10 per cent for (next) 2-5 lakhs of revenue and 7.5 per cent for revenue above Rs.5 lakhs" for all class of states. Fixed in perpetuity and dynastic succession, privy purse would be incorporated in the future Constitution of India. The *Raja* of Baramba appealed to increase privy purse of the small (B and C class) States having an annual revenue below Rs.5 lakhs. Applying diplomatic wisdom, Sardar Patel negated the proposal since the scale would be applicable to all States of India and any modification would be hotly debated in the Constituent Assembly. Indirectly appealing the conscience of the Rulers he said, " In the circumstances he could not offer anything which would make the privy purse a target of attack and bring bad name to the Rulers" and the trick had its effect. *Maharaja* of Patna requested to accept either the scale provided by the Chamber of Princes or proposed by the Deccan States Constitution. V.P. Menon explained the technical difficulty as the scale had already been accepted by the B and C class States.

Finally privy purse was determined on the above scale and following table shows privy purse and annual revenue of the States.[27]

Name of the States	Annual Revenue 1945-46 (Rs. in nearest thousands)	Privy Purse (Rs. in nearest hundreds)
Athgarh	3,11,000	36,100
Athmallik	4,05,000	45,500
Bamra	10,37,000	95,300
Baramba	1,78,000	22,700
Baudh	6,91,000	69,300
Bonai	4,78,000	52,800
Dasapalla	2,85,000	33,500
Dhenkanal	9,62,000	89,700
Gangapur	15,68,000	1,35,100
Hindol	2,69,000	32,000
Kalahandi	12,87,000	1,14,000
Keonjhar	12,47,000	1,11,000
Khandapara	2,86,000	33,600
Kharasawan	2,80,000	33,000
Mayurbhanj	41,32,000	3,27,400
Narasinghpur	2,31,000	28,100
Nayagarh	6,04,000	62,800
Nilgiri	3,50,000	40,000
Pal-Lahara	2,00,000	25,000
Patna	30,95,000	2,49,600
Rairakhol	2,47,000	29,700
Ranpur	2,00,000	25,000
Seraikella	9,52,000	88,900
Sonepur	7,89,000	76,600
Talcher	5,97,000	62,500
Tigiria	95,000	15,000

On the basis of the negotiation and settlement in Delhi, Seraikella and Kharasawan were conceded to Bihar in May 1948. Privy purse of Mayurbhanj was resettled on the basis of the annual revenue of 1947-48 at the time of its merger on 1 January 1949 and fixed at Rs.336500.[28] Further it was ascertained that privy purse would include the expenses of marriage ceremonies as well as allowances to the members of the family. Privy purse was incorporated in the Constitution of India under Article 291 and its payment continued till abolition by the 26th Amendment of the Constitutin of India in 1971.[29]

The Government of India assured to protect all privileges relating to private property, allowances, dynastic succession, dignity and titles. Also it agreed to treat land and villages, palaces, jewellery, cars, etc., as the private property and to recognise the formation of the trusts and sanction of grants and gifts made by the Rulers prior to the date of agreement. Once the issues settled, the Agreement of Merger was signed on 15 December 1947. The Government of India took over the administration of the States and delegated the same to the Government of Orissa.[30] *Maharaja* of Mayurbhanj signed the agreement on 9 November 1948 in the best interests of the State and people[31] and the Government of India took over and then delegated the administration to the Government of Orissa.[32]

The Government of Orissa under H.K. Mahtab paid special attention to handle the most embarrassing and complex problems associated with privileges. The government exhibited very soft attitude towards the States and simultaneously adopted clear and non-controversial policy. The signatory States were intimated to

submit the inventory of private property and the specified list of total assets and liabilities along with cash assets and liabilities by the date of merger[33] The government notified the following categories of claims on and dues against the States roughly constituting the liabilities of the States.[34]

1. Claims of Provident Fund Deposit i.e., subscription by the officers and the States' share with interest.
2. Civil Deposits etc., payable to parties.
3. Claims of unpaid bills of State Officers.
4. Trust Funds deposited with State Treasury
5. Contractor's earnest money deposited
6. Unpaid bills of contractors for work done up to 31.12.47
7. *Debottar* property
8. Claims against Rulers which Government may have to discharge.
9. Arrear of pay bills of officers since 1.1.47.

The Rulers of Orissa failed to rise up to the spirit of the merger negotiations while disclosing the assets and liabilities and to a greater extent misused the provisions of agreement on private property, trusts, gifts and grants. Subsequent findings on the financial irregularities created uneasy relations in some cases. In most of the cases the liabilities stood at an unreasonable amount of which the personal loan of the Rulers dischargable by the

government had a major share. For Sonepur alone the States' loan and the personal loan was Rs.6,22,344 out of the total liabilities of Rs.8,11,866.[35] The cases of Nayagarh, Khandapara, Keonjhar, etc., were other examples. On principle, only such past commitments of the Princes, as were considered reasonable and bonafide, were to be confirmed. A large number of commitments were found as entries between 14 and 31 December 1947 though very often *ante*-dated. The value of the properties and the capital commitments claimed was estimated to be approximately three crores.[36]

The genuineness of accounts submitted by the Rulers raised eyebrows both in official and non-official circles. Taking the advantage of the provisions of the agreement, the Rulers formed trusts, granted and gifted land and villages in favour of relatives as private properties, enhanced maintenance allowances, leased mines and forests, remitted loans for account adjustment and withdrew huge amounts from treasury through bogus bills and for personal use like marriage and jewellery. The fact is corroborated by the letter of the *Raja* of Rairakhol on 31 March 1948 for revival of allowances and he wrote, "It will be seen that I was almost single instance not to draw any money from the treasury illegally and hastily on the eve of the amalgamation after 14th December 1947".[37] Through the Home Department letter No.7088 dated 13 August 1948, the government expressed deep concern about overdrawals and commitments of the Rulers and for *ante*-dating of the withdrawals, grants, disposal of States' properties, bogus bills, irregular leases, and licenses.[38] Thus, the government took appropriate measures for audit of the accounts

in order to eliminate such irregularities.[39]

Similarly details of the cash assets and cash liabilities as on the same date were to be specified as the followings.[40]

CASH ASSETS

a) Advances (Permanent advance, Building advance, Advance of pay, Advance for Debottar works) sanctioned from State Treasury.

b) Loans (Taccavi Loans, Loans in some States taken by Rulers, Loans granted to the relatives and other persons)

c) Investments (National Savings Certificate and Bonds)

d) Cash as on 1.1.48

CASH LIABILITIES

a) Deposits (Provident Fund, Civil Court Deposits, Criminal Court deposits, Revenue Court deposits, Security of contractors)

b) Investments which are claimed by the rulers as their private property.

c) Claims by the third party

The following is the statement of Cash Balance, Permanent Advance to Rulers and Investments of Orissa States as assets :

States	Cash Balance taken over on 1.1.48(Rs.)	Permanent Advance on 1.1.48 (Rs.)	Investments as on 1.1.48 (Rs.)
Athgarh	20,710	17,187	N.A
Athmallik	477	48,519	3,07,153
Bamra	1,76,461	500	17,63,460
Baramba	22,346	731	41,357
Baudh	23,443	3,080	91,450
Bonai	38,760	3,924	2,12,000
Dasapalla	1,24,259	1,21,818	2,08,405
Dhenkanal	2,27,638	3,606	1,96,830
Gangapur	6,93,219	Nil	10,64,036
Hindol	10,362	300	91,090
Kalahandi	68,699	Nil	2,58,458
Keonjhar	2,19,807	1,715	10,07,432
Khandapara	3,65,516	230	1,59,604
Narasinghpur	17,480	Nil	56,057
Nayagarh	6,136	1,070	1,82,400
Nilgiri	1,66,055	1,800	2,02,473
Pal-Lahara	38,831	136	86,497
Patna	1,43,942	28,459	41,38,783
Rairakhol	1,06,483	49,337	81,670
Ranpur	39,220	Nil	1,02,690
Sonepur	1,04,217	200	55,82,480
Talcher	2,52,535	3,526	37,032
Tigiria	5,714	130	98,224

The financial assets (in cash, security and shares) left by the Rulers of Orissa States in favour of the Government of Orissa amounted approximately to Rs.1,85,00,000 and Mayurbhanj State alone contributed Rs.1,28,70,000.[41] These were the non-recurring receipts. The integration of the Orissa States had of course involved a large recurring demand on provincial revenues.

Treasury cash balance was exhausted by the overdrawals through bogus bills and nearly sixty per cent of the annual expenditure stated by the Princes was incurred between 15 and 31 December 1947. The audit report recommended for the recovery of the excess amount drawn beyond budget provisions and without valid reasons. Excess drawals to be recovered were as follows: Rs.2,23,568 from Keonjhar, Rs.38,113 from Ranapur, Rs.35,714 from Nayagarh, Rs. 18,680 from Rairakhol, Rs.26,157 from Pal-Lahara and Rs.1,45,000 from Talcher.[42] Withdrawals through bogus bills were to meet the expenses of marriage, jewellery, furniture, car and petrol for cars. Ruler of Khandapara encashed the bogus bill of Rs.33,297 for furniture, jewellery and petrol (actually not spent), Rairakhol treasury parted Rs.24,500 for ornaments in addition to the cost of car that was never purchased, Pal-Lahara appropriated Rs.14000, Keonjhar withdrew Rs.1,75,000 for marriage and jewellery on 31.12.47 and Talcher encashed Rs.1,62,032 for marriage of the princess on 22.12.47. But the Ruler of Nayagarh surpassed all his counterparts by writing off advances to the extent of Rs.358069 sanctioned against self, his brother B.C. Singh and officers, Banamali Pattnaik and Raghunath Mahapatra. Interestingly all these advances were issued after the merger but were *ante*-dated.[43] All

apart, the Princes adopted various means of granting illegal licenses, leases, contracts and remissions. Nayagarh extended irregular lease remission of Rs.4,992. Baudh settled the leases for *Khair* incurring the loss of Rs.1,32,000, sleeper money loss of Rs.22,800, Charcoal lease loss Rs.11,000 and Gur lease loss of Rs.11,500.

The Rulers managed to bring land and villages under private property by granting or leasing or even disposing them for nominal sum in favour of self, relatives and officers. *Raja* of Ranpur leased 2350.69 acres of land on permanent basis.[44] Nayagarh created trusts, endowments and accorded gifts and grants to relatives for 5198.00 acres of land. Rairakhol leased 1254.37 acres to relatives. Pal-Lahara leased 309 acres and converted 1356 acres of *Bhogra* land to *ryoti* land for nominal sum of Rs.2604. 303 acres of land was disposed of by the *Raja* of Hindol free of rent in favour of his relatives, 672 acres on nominal cash assessment and 2293.26 acres of farm land and 1512 acres of *Khamar* land was held personally.[45] Athamallik was not far behind in land grants in favour of family members and 418 acres of land granted free of rent to distant relatives.[46] Huge quantity of land was granted irregularly by the *Raja* of Keonjhar to relatives and officers.[47] The Government of Orissa, after careful scrutiny, decided to declare null and void all such irregular grants, 'not reasonable and bonafide' including land, village, cash, remission, licenses and leases.[48]

The allowances received by the relatives and non-relatives of the Rulers of Orissa formed a sizeable chunk of the government revenue. Once the merger was agreed upon, the

Rulers arbitrarily and irregularly enhanced the allowance. Allowances charged on the revenues of the States were created for meritorious services, allowances given in exchange for surrendering private lands to the State and mostly maintenance allowances granted to the relatives by the Rulers.[49] The Ruler of Pal-Lahara enhanced the allowances of *Rani Saheba* to Rs.1505 and *Yubarani* to Rs.1217 but the Provincial Government approved Rs.1169 for the *Rani*.[50] Sonepur enhanced the existing allowances and Athmallik granted fresh ones.[51] Some States like Khandapara, Keonjhar, Nayagarh and Baramba had the benevolency of sanctioning allowances to non-relatives. It would not be out of place to mention that some Rulers had accorded both land and money grants to their illegitimate branches. The allowances to the relatives and non-relatives varied from 4 annas (25 paise) to Rs.2000 per month.[52]

In spite of extensive provision for allowances the relatives of the Rulers very often petitioned either for sanction of maintenance allowance afresh or for enhancement of the existing ones as a reprieve for miserable livings including *Raja* of Rairakhol,[53] relatives of the Rulers of Pal-Lahara,[54] Hindol,[55] Athmallik,[56] Sonepur[57] and many others. Even some of the Rulers claimed to make provision for meeting the expenses on the education of the heir apparent or any son or relation from the government grant.[58] The government advised the relatives to be self-dependent by earning their own livings. The government reiterated its stand under Article 2 of the Merger Agreement that privy purse covered the expenses of maintenance, marriage, education and ceremonies of the family including consort or

consorts and children. As separate allowances were inadmissible, the government had to stop these payments in order to obviate audit objections.[59] The following statement shows the details of the allowances enjoyed by the *Rajamatas*, relatives, and non-relatives per annum on the recommendation of the Government of Orissa and approval of the Government of India till they were abolished.[60]

States	Allowances of *Rajamatas* (in nearest rupees)	Allowances of Relatives (in nearest rupees)	Allowances of Non-Relatives (in nearest rupees)	Total
Athgarh	6,000	1,112	Nil	7,112
Athmallik	8,508	6,006	Nil	14,514
Bamra	20,800	16,059	Nil	38,859
Baramba	3,000	316	84	3,400
Baudh	Nil	1,084	Nil	1,084
Bonai	Nil	4,620	Nil	4,620
Dasapalla	Nil	1,360	Nil	1,360
Dhenkanal	9,000	24,696	Nil	33,696
Gangapur	29,400	11,820	Nil	41,220
Hindol	Nil	3,626	Nil	3,626
Kalahandi	20,400	16,200	Nil	36,600
Keonjhar	17,400	15,948	252	33,600
Khandapara	504	311	210	1,035
Narasinghpur	Nil	541	Nil	541
Nayagarh	Nil	20,134	74	20,208
Nilgiri	1,800	1,800	Nil	3,600
Pal-Lahara	1,200	516	Nil	1,716
Patna	5,496	24,624	Nil	30,120
Rairakhol	2,400	300	Nil	2,700
Ranpur	11,760	Nil	Nil	11,760
Sonepur	4,500	7,800	Nil	12,300
Talcher	10,200	4,694	Nil	14,894
Tigiria	504	608		1,112
Total	**1,52,872**	**1,64,175**	**620**	**3,17,667**

Certain dignities and titles raised minor reactions among the Rulers. Customs like firing guns of salutes was the personal privilege and the government acknowledged the privilege on ceremonial occasions of States' limit not extending to rest of the provinces or the unions.[61] Disputes arose while in official correspondences, during the post merger period, the Rulers were addressed as 'Ex-Rulers' or 'Rulers' or 'Ex-Rajas'. The Prime Minister of Orissa settled the issue by specific order to address them according to their hereditary titles.[62] Finally the government issued a circular notifying the titles appropriate for the Rulers. Rulers of Mayurbhanj, Patna, Sonepur and Kalahandi were to be addressed as 'His Highness The Maharaja', while the Rulers of Hindol and Narasinghpur were designated as 'Raja-Bahadur' and all other Rulers were to be addressed as 'Raja'.[63]

The history of merger of the States will be incomplete without mention of the final episode. If the recommendations of the Enquiry Committee headed by H.K. Mahtab was the prologue, the abolition of privy purse was the epilogue. In between, the actions and counteractions for merger covered the hectic course. However, in all phases Orissa commands the rare honour and pride as the initiator of the merger proposal in 1939, executor of the proposal in 1947, and champion for the abolition of privy purse in 1951 and 1965. H.K. Mahtab clearly ventilated his mind to Pandit Nehru regarding privy purse.[64] The storm was taken into the Lok Sabha by B.C. Patnaik, the veteran *Prajamandalist* and the then Congress M.P. from Dhenkanal, on 26 April 1965.[65] Finally, 26th Amendment of Constitution passed by the Indian Parliament, received the assent of the President of India on 28

December 1971 "to abolish privy purses and extinguish all rights, liabilities and obligations in respect of privy purses.[66] The process that started in one December, interestingly, was concluded in another December twenty four years later.

Abolition of Princely System had taken place after bloody revolutions or wars in many parts of the world. But merger of Princely States of India had surprised as well as amused the people abroad so much that Khruschev observed, "You Indians are remarkable people. You did manage to liquidate the Princely States without liquidating the Princes".[67]

Common but sometimes bitter criticism against the merger of States was that under the threat of coercion, the States were forced to yield for merger. But the proceedings of the meeting at Cuttack leaves no trace of intimidation to substantiate the criticism. It reveals as if the meeting was convened to dispel certain doubts of the Rulers relating to privilege and dignity. It was natural, under all circumstances, on the part of any State or Ruler to feel insecure while entering into a completely new political set up that prescribed different concepts for privilege, dignity, right and duty. Further, it was not easy to set aside the age old privileges that made the Rulers little hesitant for merger and to work, some extent, against merger.

On the other side, Sardar Patel highlighted the growing political unrest in the States, the persistent demand for responsible government and difficulty of the Rulers to maintain law and order. The Rulers of Baramba, Ranpur , Nilgiri, Seraikella and Kharasawan raised these problems in the meeting. Seraikella sought the assurance for immediate end to the

Prajamandal agitation and peace during the interim period. Kharasawan expressed helplessness to counter the ultimatum of the *Praja Mandal* for responsible government and threat of the Tribal leaders for merger with Bihar.[68] V.P. Menon suggested the merger with Orissa as immediate solution for peace and conceded to conduct, if necessary, the plebicite later to ascertain the wishes of the people. Even the *Maharaja* of Mayurbhanj was allowed to consult the States' officials. It will be hypothetical to conclude that use of force or blackmail brought the merger smoothly.[69]

Of course, the Rulers of smaller States were in panic due to lapse of the British Paramountcy under which they felt protected. The recommendation of the Cabinet Mission Plan for the State to surrender defence, foreign affairs and communications to the Government of India might have created the second paramount power. This administrative dualism was meant to substitute one paramountcy by the other and to create lots of administrative deadlocks. Acceptance of this recommendation would have gone against the traits of democracy and freedom for which the people of both British India and States were fighting century long battle. Finally, no such reaction, barring one case, was found during the post-merger period either from the Government of Orissa or from the Rulers that proves intimidation and anti-merger activity. Attempt of the *Raja* of Patna State to revive the Eastern States Union and to incite anti-merger feelings by publishing objectionable news in the *Praja Mitra* was the single instance. Also the step taken by the Government of Orissa to counter the subversive activities was an administrative necessity.[70] In spite of this, the Government of India accorded total recognition to the

privilege, status and dignity of the Rulers of Orissa States through a fresh memorandum.[71]

Initiative, perseverence, statesmanship and diplomatic skill of Sardar Patel, H.K. Mahtab and V.P. Menon in one side and the attitude of compromise and negotiation among the Rulers of Orissa accomplished the oneness of India though the partition was a deep wound bleeding profusedly. Otherwise, the story of merger might have been different and the map of India might be looking the pock-marked one. Any hostile and belligerent effort on the part of the Rulers might have brought political upset in India just emerging out of British colonialism. Rightly Sardar Patel remarked in the Constituent Assembley", "The capacity of mischief and trouble on the part of the rulers if the settlement with them would not have been reached on a negotiated basis was far greater than could be imagined at this stage. Let us do justice to them; let us place ourselves in their position and then assess the value of their sacrifice".[72] Of course the entire business, from transfer of power to merger, was conducted so swiftly and tactfully that there was hardly any scope to think and act otherwise. Thus it is aptly observed "The Process of transfer of power from British to Indian hands was being decided upon so rapidly that it upset the design of the Princes for independent existence".[73]

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13

MERGER OF PRINCELY STATES: AN ADMINISTRATIVE NEED

Sarat Chandra Jena

The story of the integration of 26 Princely States formerly known as *Garjats* of Orissa is an interesting episode in the history of Orissa. The uprising of the States people against the autocracy of the State's Rulers and harrowing tales of tears and troubles of the dipressed and distressed state people to achieve their ultimate civil and political rights through democracy and end of Czarist regime in the States are more interesting to analyse them through original sources available in the Orissa State Archives, Bhubaneswar. It is necessary to know that how the State people were writing the final chapter of their glorious struggle for freedom and self-determination. The present paper deals with some of the important aspects of the Princely States, how merger of the above States was an administrative need not only to maintain law and order of the States but also to constitute a Greater Orissa for better prospects of the people as a whole.

The Princely States of India were directly ruled by the British Crown through the administrative control of the Governor.

General of India. In 1931 all the important States were placed under the direct political relation with the Government of India. In 1946, the Interim Government of India decided to set up a separate Department of States to conduct its relations with the Indian States in the matter of common concern and Sardar Patel took charge of it in July,1947.[1]

With the attainment of Indian Independence on 15 August 1947, the British Paramountcy over the Princely States lapsed. The British conceded their suzernity over the Princely States. The Princes became independent, but there was one condition attached to this independence in the Government of India Act passed by the British Parliament that they should accede whether to India or to Pakistan.[2] The act did not lay down any condition for their accession. There was no machinery provided by which they could accede to one of the Dominions.[3] The Instrument of Accession approved by the Governor General after their discussion in the Chamber of Princes was duly executed by the Rulers of the States.

The accession was to bind each Prince with the Union Government only in three subjects like Defence, External Affairs and in Ancillary cases. Some of the Rulers were reluctant to accede to Dominion of India with apprehension of encroaching their sovereignty or imposing financial liability over the States. But according to the provision of Instrument of Accession, the Central Government had no authority to encroach their internal autonomy or sovereignty of the States except the subjects mentioned above. They wanted all Princely States to be obliterated and urged their cases before the State Reorganisation

Commissioner. The Commission appreciated their point of view and recommended that the Indian Union should have primary constituent units having equal status and uniform relationship with the centre.[4]

The situation became complicated when the Princes in India proclaimed themselves as "Sovereign" made independent under the Indian Independence Act, 1947.[5] Indian Independence inspired the States' people to enjoy the freedom as their counter parts in the neighbouring provinces. Economic prosperity of the Province of Orissa as well as the States needed a consolidated planning and administrative expediency required the integration of the States with the Province for successful execution of such plans.[6] In this context the members of the Orissa State Enquiry Committee had remarked that: "The people of these States have everything in common with their neighbour in the Province of Orissa, except the matter of administration. Common culture, social usages, religious thought and mode of living bind the people who are cut in several political jurisdiction. The same literature inspire them and awaken common ideals and aspirations".[7] Even the recommendation of the Indian Statutary Commission held similar view as it noted: "The Orissa Feudatory States which are not part of British Orissa should be brought into relationship with administrative set up for Orissa".[8]

The Princes, under the treaty obligation, assumed the status of sovereign through the *Sanads* granted to them are no way different from those of the *Zamindars* of permanently settled areas of the Province. Taking the advantage of the sovereign status the Chiefs compelled the people to economic exploitation

and political oppression and finally emerged as the autocratic agents of the British Paramount.

The *Garjat* States of Orissa were then covering an area of about 28,656 sq. miles and a population of 46.5 lakshs.[9] The aggregate income of these States was much less than half of that of Orissa. While the whole world was advancing towards establishment of bigger units and organisations, it is ridiculous that the Orissa States of which the smallest Tigiria with a population of 24,000, area of 47 sq. miles with an income of 45,000 was allowed to exercise sovereign power and left free to negotiate terms with a foreign authority.[10] It was threatened to progress, peace and security of the people as a whole. In the interest of India it was necessary that those small units of administration was to be linked up with the nearest province.

After 3 June 1947 the British had maintained a policy of creating two. anti-front to frustrate the growing nationalist movement by generating communal division and princely discussion. After partition the people, the people of Orissa States struggled to achieve full democratic rights along with their brethren in neighbouring province. They played equal role in the national struggle for freedom with the hope that alongwith the British the princely system would be eliminated and they would became part and parcel of Independent India. That hope was shattered on account of the approval of the existence of sovereign States.

In the year 1931, the States' people for the first time ventilated their aspiration for responsible government in the First

Orissa States People's Conference held at Cuttack. Prior to that, in these small tracts of 26 chiefs governing, under the direct advice of British Political Officers, there had been a series of popular spontaneous uprisings aimed at securing redress of some urgent economic and political grievances. People in Nilgiri, Talcher, Nayagarh, Ranpur, Boudh, Bamara and Dhenkanal rose under local leaders against arbitracy taxation *abwabs* (illegal cesses) and *bethi* (forced labour). With the moral and physical support of Congress Movement in the British India Provinces, political consciousness of the People in Orissa States began to grow against all odds.

The Second Orissa States People's Conference held in 1937 under the presidentship of Dr. Pattabi Sitaramayya and the Congress Ministry in Orissa infused the hope for availing all civil liberty and privileges as the people in Orissa Province.[11]

The States' Peoples' movement took a new direction and momentum hereafter. The struggle continued in organised way under the *Prajamandals* of the States. Resistance to Princely order and struggle for freedom had its out burst in Nilgiri (1938), martyrosm of Baji Rout, a boy of 12 years in Dhenkanal, mass exodus of people from Talcher to Angul, popular uprising in Nayagarh and finally in murder of Bazelgatte, Political Agent in Ranpur (1939).[12] Achievement of independence coming closer, the reaction of the Rulers was going direct in opposite direction of integrated India. They created an Eastern States Union to prop up their feudal rule under a show of representative constitutional government in their respective areas. The Regional Council characterised the Rulers Union as undemocratic, arbitrary and

ludicrous. The formation of the Eastern States Union was coupled with a new policy of encouragement of rival States' Peoples' Organisations in several states and indirect support and incitement to go against the popular organisations.

The policy of force replaced by the policy of "divide and rule", learnt possibly in the legacy of their erstwhile masters - the British. That resulted in lawlessness in many states.

The lawlessness in Nilgiri caused anxiety in the minds of the Orissa Government and Indian Dominion government had to take over the administration of Nilgiri State on 14 November 1947 exactly a month and a half before the other States were integrated with the neighbouring province.[13]

The political developments in Nilgiri was the factor to justify the proposition that the merger was an administrative need. The unrest was sporadic and violent for which the Ruler of Nilgiri was helpless to restore law and order into normalcy. Even he openly confessed his inability ineptness to meet the expediency. The intensity of popular unrest tended to had its adverse effects on the neighbouring Balasore district under Orissa Province. On the other hand the oppresive methods adopted to suppress the movement drew the attention of both the Governments of India and of Orissa. As a result of the Government of India decided to take over administration of Nilgiri[14] and accordingly, the Government of Orissa took immediate step by ordering the District Magistrate of Balasore for prompt action. Consequently, the District Administration held the responsibility from 14 November 1947.[15] The entire episode set

an example not for merger but for voluntary transfer of power from the Rulers to the representative of the ruled i.e. the Provincial Government. So it is not exaggerate to say that Nilgiri culminated the way to merger not only to the States of Orissa but also to all Rulers of the States of India. In other words Nilgiri prompted immediate action on the matter. The formal merger of the Nilgiri State was accorded with the signature of the Merger Agreement on 15 December 1947 at Cuttack in the presence of Sardar Patel, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of States Affairs of India and Harekrushna Mahtab, the Primer of Orissa.[16] This reflects the taken over of the administration was an administrative necessity for the People, the Prince and the Province. If it was a necessity in case of Nilgiri, the merger of other States of Orissa should not be review from different angle.

Considering the urgent need of merger on administrative ground the princes of B and C class States were invited by the Government to the meeting held in the Government House, Cuttack on 14 December 1947 at 10 A.M. to discuss about the matter and a separate meeting was organised for A class States at 4.30 p.m. on the same situation in the presence of Sardar Patel, Deputy Prime Minister of India and Harekrushna Mahtab, the Primer of Orissa alongwith the Administrative Executives of both the Governments of Orissa and of India. The meeting was attended by 12 B and C class Rulers like the Raja of Athgarh, Baramba, Daspalla, Hindol, Khandapara, Kharsawan, Narsinghpur, Nilgiri, Pal-Lahara, Ranpur and Rairakhol.[17]

The Hon'ble Deputy Prime Minister impressed upon the Rulers about the detoriorating law and order situations in the

states demanding immediate attention as the safety of the Rulers and the people were in danger. Then he pointed out that there were serious distrubances bordering Orissa Province during the last 2 months. He also explained the incidents occured in Nilgiri how the innocent aborginals were incited by the Communists and the Ruler himself to create split among the workers, created anarchy in the State and the Dominion Government was compelled to ask the Government of Orissa to take over the administration of Nilgiri. He also expressed how all the developments had brought him to Cuttack to discuss friendly with them for amicable settlement of the disputes between the States and the people with a view to establishing Greater Province for the welfare of the people as a whole. In his words, "Free India had to plan the progress of every Federal Unit and Orissa free from all problems, Communist or Communal, was ready to march on the path of economic development particularly as its social fabric had not been disturbed by any communal animosities. The problem of the province, however, which was holding up its legitmate right to progress was the problem of a number of petty States left as a legacy of British rule - which cut across the province and ruined its unit". Further he said that "Responsible Government in petty States like Nilgiri had no meaning. In the circumstances if Orissa Government suggested merger of the States in the Province it was not with any selfish motive to sallow all states but it was designed in the best interest of the people of the states and the Province as both were determined to march rapidly on the path of progress". He assured the Rulers that the privileges, honour, dignity, dynastic succession and happiness along with their Privy Purse enjoyed by the Rulers and their

family would be guaranted. The government of India had considered every aspects of the States and had come to conclusion that there was no alternative solution for the smaller states of Orissa except merger for the greater interest of all concerned to establish a joint united administration. During the discussion the Rulers of Ranpur, Baramba, Kharsawan, Patna and Kalahandi sought some clarification and assurance. Hon'ble Deputy Premier Minister, Hon'ble Prime of Orissa and Mr. V.P. Menon explained them and they concluded that merger was the best solution and the Rulers were asked to sign the Agreement of Merger which were served earlier conceding power, authority and jurisdiction to the Government of Orissa. Sardar Patel clarified that the agreement which the Rulers were to sign visualized an interim agreement for bringing about common administration with Orissa Province and the perpetual guarantee of privy purse, dynastic succession, privileges and dignities embodied in the agreement was to be incorporated in the constitution of India permanently. As complete merger needed legislation it was proposed that during the interim period the administrative policy applicable to Orissa was to be worked out for common administration.[18]

Finally, all the B and C class States who were prersent signed the Agreement. Out of 11 A class States 7 Rulers accepted the proposal and signed the Agreement except Nayagarh, Bamara and Keonjhar. The Rulers of B and C Class States like Athmallick, Bonai and Tigiria who could not attend the meetings and three A Class States signed the same later.[19] However, Mayurbhanj acceded later on 1 January 1949.

The proceedings of the meeting carry no sign of compulsion rather the Rulers were made to understand the merits of the merger. Even the proceedings of the meetings with the Rulers of the central province at Nagpur on the following day was of the same tone. The Rulers felt the need of merger and accorded it.[20]

Sardar Patel after returning to Delhi on 16 December 1947, he paid a tribute to the Rulers, who had shown commendable appreciation of the realities of the situation and a benevolent regard for the public good. Then he met Gandhiji and Jawaharlal Nehru, the Prime Minister of India and explained the detail accounts of the merger of Eastern States. Gandhiji was over satisfied hearing the story of merger of the Orissa and the Chhatisgarh States and remarked, "merger of the States was like giving Castor oil to Children". After reporting the matter to the Prime Minister of India he placed it before the Cabinet for its approval.[21]

On the 23 December, in exercise of the powers conferred by Sub-section 2 of the Section 3 of the Extra Provincial Jurisdiction Act, 1947 (No. XLVII of 1947) the Government of India delegated to the Government of Orissa the full and exclusive authority, jurisdiction and power for governance of the Orissa States under the same administrative policy that were applicable for the district of Orissa.[22] The merger of the States of Orissa worked out with effect from 1 January 1948.[23] The Rulers were made equally responsible for the affairs of the Province of Orissa. In this connection the Governor of Orissa was pleased to declare under Notification No.876-A, dt.19 January 1948 issued

by the Government of Orissa in the Home Department that the Rulers and all subjects of Orissa States as defined in the Administration of Orissa States Order, 1948 were eligible to hold any civil office in connection with the affairs of Orissa.[24]

Simultaneously, the Government of India also issued a separate notification, No.125-IB, dt.13 January 1948 declaring the Indian States specified in the scheduled thereto annexed were ceded full and exclusive jurisdiction to the Central Government. Under the same notification the powers conferred by Sub - section.(1) of Section-3 and Section-4 of the Extra Provincial Jurisdiction Act, 1947 (XLVII of 1947), and all other powers on behalf of the Central Government, the Government was pleased to direct that the existing law, rule, order or notification in the said states as imposes any prohibition or restrictions or imposes a duty of customs, on the import into or export from any such state from or to another such state from or to any other provinces of Orissa, Bihar and the Central Provinces, goods of any classes were cancelled with effect from 1 January 1948.[25] In pursuance of the above order the Government of Orissa exercised the powers conferred by sub-paragaph-13 of the administration of Orissa State Order 1948, the provincial Government was pleased to make rules and to Constitute Advisory Committee for the States of Orissa with number of members to the said committee as per Rule-7, against each state except Mayurbhanj.[26]

Out of 26 *Garjat* States Mayurbhanj was allowed to conduct the Popular Government. The States of Sareikalla and Kharsawan were temporarily merged with Orissa. Again these two states were handed over to Bihar on 17 May 1948[27] after

discussion in the conference held at New-Delhi among the representatives of Bihar and Orissa organised by the Ministry of Sates. The merger of Mayurbhanj received a minor jolt when the Adivasi leader Sonaram Soren demanded the merger with Bihar instead of Orissa. The problem was tactfully handled by Mr. V.P. Menon, the Political Adviser of the States Affairs and Hon'ble Harekrushna Mahtab. After lapse of one year the *Maharaja* could realise the need of merger for the best interest of both the Ruler and the people of the State. So the matter was negotiated with the Ministry of States by the *Maharaja* in the presence of his Primier and *Adivasi* leaders. On the historic day of 17 October 1948 the *Maharaja* signed the Instrument of Merger. Then virtually the State was taken over by the government of India on 9 November 1948.[28] In this context the Ministry of States issued an order, No.388-P/48, dt. 31 December 1948 for Governance of Mayurbhanj States with effect from 1 January 1949.[29] In exercise of the powers conferred by Sub-section (2) of Section 3 of the Extra-Provincial Jurisdiction Act 1947 (XLVII of 1947), by dint of this order the Central Government delegated the powers of administration superseding the previous order on the administration of Mayurbhanj States by Orissa. The order was duly published by the Government of Orissa under Notification No.428/Sates dt. 10 January 1949 for Public concern. Under the above Act the Government of Orissa was pleased to make order to recognise the administration of Mayurbhanj for the effective exercise of extra-provincial jurisdiction.[30] Besides, the Orissa Government enacted laws for administration of Mayurbhanj States.[31]

In the mean time the memorandum prepared by the Government of India on the personal privileges and dignities of the Rulers of Orissa was sent to the Government of Orissa which was circulated to all departments under Order No. 2863 (16) Sts. dt.16 February 1949 for its implementation according to Article-4 of the Agreement signed by the Rulers of Orissa and Chhatisgarh States. Provided that the Rulers as well as the Ministers of his family were entitled to all personal privileges which they enjoyed immediately before the 15th day of August 1947.[32]

The dream for integration of smaller Princely States of Orissa with that of the neighbouring province was started from Nilgiri at the infractive of the people for obtaining the democratic right and was completed with the merger of Mayurbhanj. Further specific number of seats were allotted to the states of Orissa for participation in the representative government with effect from 1 August 1949, and for Public information it was published in the Orissa Gazette.[33]

Lastly, the integration of Orissa States was made it necessary to make appropriate modifications and amendments in the administration of Orissa States Order 1948 so as to bring it into a line with the system of criminal and revenue administration of districts of Orissa with effect from 15 April 1948.[34]

The Principal feature of the amendments were : (a) the constitution of separate Executive Council of the Orissa State Assembly and Advisory Committee for the States were abolished. (b) the post of Administrator in the States was also abolished and

the same was replaced by the post of District Magistrate or Sub-divisional Magistrate as the case may be. (c) the Chief Administrator and Special commissioner was replaced by as Commissioner, Northern Division in respect of the States Athmallick, Baramba, Bonai, Dhenkanal, Gangpur, Hindol, Keonjhar, Kalahandi, Pal-Lahara, Patna, Rairakhol, Sonepur, Talcher and as Revenue Commissioner, Orissa in respect of the States like Athgarh, Baramba, Baudh, Daspalla, Khandapara, Nayagarh, Narsinghpur, Nilgiri, Ranpur and Tigiria. In other words the Revenue Commissioner, Orissa was given jurisdiction over the States which were then under administrative units of the undivided districts of Puri, Cuttack, Balasore and Kondmals.

Eventually, Orissa took the lead on all India basis for integration of Princely States. It is one of the most important landmarks in the history of India. Democratization of administration which was the keynote of the Congress nationalists was completed peacefully in Orissa and the aspiration for making of Greater Orissa was fulfilled.

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14

HAREKRUSHNA MAHTAB : CREATION OF GREATER ORISSA

Dr. Soma Chand

Among all of Harekrushna Mahtab's achievements his most original contribution lay in the field of creating Greater Orissa. As the first linguistic Province of India, Orissa made its appearance in 1936, but the Greater Orissa made its presence in 1948. The critics of Mahtab would even unhesitatingly testify to his glorious role in the amalgamation of the Princely States of India in general and Orissa in particular.

Historian of the day, Durga Das, highlights the role of Mahtab:

"Narrating the story of the first merger, Patel told me that the idea had originated with Harekrushna Mahtab who formed in 1938 the State *Prajamandal* - an organisation of the people living in the States of Orissa. This Orissan Congress leader proposed that the small States be merged with the Province under the British administration and the States' Peoples' Conference appointed a committee with Mahtab as its Chairman to study the proposal in relation to Orissa. The Committee recommended that the States be brought under the Provincial Government as reforms

in them while they maintained their separateness would have no value."

The idea blossomed when Mahtab took the matter to Cripps Mission during their visit in 1942. Though the Political Department recognised its feasibility it practically did nothing. After Independence when the States were left as usual, Mahtab convinced Gandhi and Patel of the soundness and practical approach of his scheme of merging these tiny pockets with the mainland. In November 1947, he set the process in motion in Orissa, the swansong of his contribution to the Freedom Struggle in India.

During the British period the Feudatory States of Orissa acknowldged the Suzerainty of the Paramount Power. But side by side they were under an implied obligation to render assistance in resisting invaders whereas in other respects neither the ancient kings of Orissa nor their successors, the Mughals and Marathas, had interfered in their administration. Within its rugged barriers each State was permitted to work out its own growth.

The States of Orissa consisted of three groups: the largest group was known as Tributary Mahals or *Garjats* consisting of 17 States which since the British conquest had been attached to the Orissa Division under the Commissioner of Orissa at Cuttack. Two of these states Boudh and Athmallik, however, for a time formed part of South West Frontier Agency with headquarters at Ranchi, but subsequently in 1837 came under Orissa. In 1905, the five Oriya speaking States of Patna, Kalahandi, Sonepur, Bamara and Rairakhol were transferred to the Orissa Division

from the Central Province. At the same time the two States of Gangpur and Bonai were transferred from Chhotnagpur Division. The States thus incorporated in the Division of Orissa now numbered twentysix and all Oriya-speaking States were now under one Division. These amalgamated groups of States were known as Feudatory States of Orissa and a Political Agent was appointed to assist the Chiefs.

The elite circle in these Feudatory States with the hope to be a part of the mainstream of 'Enlightened India' had formed a volunteer corps with over one lakh members. Although this army was basically non-violent, they had the potential and psychology of centuries of torture to spark violence in overthrowing Princely rule.

Pabitra Mohan Pradhan, a prominent *Garjat* leader, recalled that as a subject of a Feudatory State he personally used to hope for merger of all Princely States with India. In this connection he referred to the hearty support of Mahtab, then Prime Minister of Orissa, to their organisation. On the contrary, the Princes complained to Gandhiji and suggested to the British that drastic actions be taken against such developments. But the Premier always used to argue down the Princely suggestions because he firmly believed that these States should merge with the mainland to create a Greater Orissa.

Prajamandals were formed in Princly Orissa in 1938 with Sarangdhar Das, Balunkeswar Acharya, Pabitra Mohan Pradhan and others. Mahtab remained their adviser who always counselled them to follow the Gandhian path of non-violent non-

cooperation. His timely help and support with his personal and administrative influence along with the blessings of Gandhiji and AICC helped the people's movements to gather momentum in the States.

Nilgiri proved the trend-setter in peaceful demonstration against the autocratic rule of its ruler. At Talcher when a mass exodus was organised by the ordinary citizens in 1938, Mahtab remained behind the scene and guided the leaders. In case of Dhenkanal, he brought about a settlement between the *Raja* and the *Prajamandal* leaders. But his real courage was exhibited on the day when Major Bazalgette was killed by the mob of Ranpur and cleverly led the innocent people to avoid a reign of terror by British soldiers.

More spectacular was his role in February 1946. In the last week of February when Sir Stafford Cripps came to India for holding talks with the members of AICWC and Gandhiji. Mahtab too was involved in the talks. However, the talks proved futile.

But Mahtab submitted a report of his own to him entitled "Congress pleas for amalgamation of Orissa States with Orissa Province". It provided a spark to the political heap of gun-powder waiting to be dignited in a volatile India. Many were terrified out of their wits. Ironically, there were some Congress leaders who were close friends of the *Rajas* and they didn't wish to sacrifice their own interests.

Mahtab showed commendable courage in explaining his views on the problem to the Commission. He quoted examples from a 1905 government report on Orissa that if Dhenkanal

caught cholera then entire Cuttack cannot be saved; the dacoits of Balasore would take shelter in Mayurbhanj and cannot be nabbed. He clarified further that if the States were not merged with British India, then the administration of the whole country would be in Jeopardy and public safety would be at stake. Mahtab's protestations were also echoed by the Communists who claimed that Federation was impossible under the roof of such a dictatorial platform.

Long before independence Mahtab had warned :

i) The Princely States were never in the history legally independent nor should they ever remain so. They were mere King's employees as tax-collectors during the early Hindu-Muslim rule. They just didn't possess any right to be independent.

ii) There was an expediency of secret political motive on the part of the British to declare these Princely States independent.

iii) Every Princely State is a part of some Province demarcated on the basis of language spoken by its residents. It should, therefore, be obligatory to form boundaries of States on the ground of language. (This suggestion of Mahtab was more or less put into action in 1956.)

The Mission was highly impressed with Mahtab's pleas for amalgamation, but at the same time expressed its helplessness to do anything in particular for the Orissa States as their hands

were full with more pressing problems concerning the whole country.

In 1946, the British Labour Government sent Cabinet Mission to India to finalise the Transfer of Power. Mahtab again submitted a memorandum to the members of the Mission regarding the amalgamation of Princely States and held long discussions with them. He made no *qualms* about directly merging the twentysix States with the Province of Orissa. The bureaucratic goings-on and the Princely tussle to retain their Suzerainty, many of them recorded and preserved, do make an interesting reading even today.

On 14 May 1946, Mahtab sent a wire to Secretary of States, Lord Pathick Lawrence and the Viceroy Lord Wavell : "Hope to be excused for reminding your Lordship that twentysix States should be amalgamated with the province in the interest of both, otherwise *Oriyas* as a race will go down in the present day competition. It is within your Lordship's power even under present constitution to effect amalgamation without hurting fairness and justice."

On 18 May the wire form the Private Secretary to Lord Wavell to Mahtab read : "Reference to your telegram of 14th May about Orissa States; His Excellency hopes that association satisfactory alike to the Province and the States will be achieved as a result of negotiations completed in para 14 of the Cabinet Mission's statement of May 16". On behalf of the princely states the *Maharaja* of Patna R.N. Singha Deo wrote a long letter to Lord Wavell on 30 June 1946 and summed it up: "..We cannot for

a moment believe that it can ever be the intention of your Excellency and the Crown Department to encourage Mr. Harekrushna Mahtab in his present attitude and to make the position of the Orissan States difficult..."

In the meanwhile Mahtab also held discussions with some of the *garjat* Provinces on preservation and utilisation of natural resources in these States in a mutually beneficient way.

Though the Cabinet Mission realised the mistakes done by their predecessors, there was no scope for them to correct them at such a later stage. Thus, when the British left India finally on 15 August 1947, they left India, Pakistan and all 592 States free to do as they liked -- a dangerous situation where India would have to face Pakistan and also hundreds of tiny independent States who might join together and form one or more viable unions of their own. While Hyderabad stubbornly refused to have any track with India, some others joined hands to form their own unions like Deccan States' Union and Eastern States' Union. The latter comprised all the Orissa states and the Chhattisgarh States in M.P. They also raised a few battalions of army to quell rebellion, wherever necessary.

In the words of Mahtab, "Will it be believed today that between August and December 1947 the Orissa Government Transport Service had to obtain permits from four of the then kingdoms of Athgarh, Dhenkanal, Athmallik and Rairakhol ? The States' Union also enquired whether aeroplanes of Orissa government could fly over their kingdoms without their prior permission."

After the acceptance of the proposals of the Cabinet Mission, a Constituent Assembly was formed to frame a new constitution for Free India. On behalf of the Constituent Assembly, a Negotiation Committee was set up to invite the cooperation of the representatives of the Princely States. Cochin, Udaipur, Jaipur, Jodhpur, Bikaner, Rewa and Patiala were the first States to send their delegates to the Constituent Assembly.

In April 1947 Dr. Rajendra Prasad welcomed these delegates as the President of the Assembly and assured them of their position in the new constitution. Even Nehru clarified that unity and integrity of the country would bring no hindrance to the administration of the States. The Eastern States' Union was planning to send its representatives to the Constituent Assembly for redressal of their grievances. On the other hand, Mahtab was busy not to allow them to establish such a forum.

The Political Department fully backed the rulers to thwart any popular rebellion in the States. In fact, it was the Political Department that advised some rulers to instigate the tribals against other inhabitants in their States - a suggestion assiduously followed by the ruler of Nilgiri.

Thus, the santhals of Nilgiri with the backing of the *Durbar* rose in revolt against non-santhals by setting fire to houses and committing such other nuisances. The ruler calculated that the innocent people terrorised by them would approach the *Durbar* for protection and this would end the people's agitation for democracy.

The Government of Orissa held the plea of not allowing lawlessness in a neighbouring area for fear of its spreading into its own jurisdiction. So with the knowledge and tacit approval of the Government of India a battalion of Orissa Reserve Police marched into the Nilgiri State on 14 November 47 and forced the ruler to hand over the administration of his State to the Government of Orissa.

Today it will be an enigma for the constitutional experts as to how a foreign territory could be acquired and under what law the acquired territory was administered. This dare devil act by the Government of Orissa created a flutter among the so-called independent rulers that they could not have their own way in the new dispensation.

By this time V.P.Menon, Secretary to Patel, devised a formula according to which the rulers would surrender some of their powers to the Government of India and retain some powers for themselves as advised by the Government of India. In short, the Government of Orissa would assume the place of Paramount Power and the rulers would have their local authority.

But the possibility of such a formula was erased by a single stroke by the Government of Orissa itself. Patel came to Cuttack on 13 December 47. After a long and searching discussion with Mahtab he was convinced that complete merger was the only solution. In this context Patel wrote, "...More than ten years ago Mahtab conceived a future for Orissa which he had the good fortune to realise in his own lifetime.... I am happy that I helped him to realise what was not only his ambition but also

the dream and ambition of all Oriyas. It was that backward province which led the way for the rest of India to follow."

On 15 August 47 only British India had become independent. But on 15 December 47 the *Garjat* Rulers signed a Statement of Merger and on 1 January 48 amalgamation was effected and the final inclusion of Mayurbhanj took place on 1 January 49. A suit was later filed in the Orissa High Court and Justice Birakishore Ray gave the verdict that the pact of 15 December was legal.

The legacy of the British Raj had left for the Indian administrators the problem of six hundred odd States inside an independent country that appeared like a perpetual nightmare and a labyrinth to which Nehru, Patel and even Gandhi had no key. It was Free India with a fait accompli leading to a whole host of unheard of and unthinkable problems. The very number of the States (some as tiny as having less than forty square miles and some even bigger than England and Ireland taken together) with big and small Princes having little knowledge in state craft, with tiny air lines and transport, with ancient revenue and judicial codes - the rulers built castles in the air to create favourable public opinion for the preservation of their status quo gifted by the British lords during their departure.

Thus, after the merger of the States Mahtab wrote, "the myth which the British created in course of a century and a half was exploded on 14 December at Cuttack which was the contribution of Orissa to India in the post-independent era".

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15

SARANGADHAR DAS - PIONEER OF THE PEOPLE'S RESISTANCE AGAINST FEUDAL AUTOCRACY IN ORISSA PRINCELY STATES

Sadananda Chaudhury

Nineteen hundred thirty eight was the year of the peasant's movement in Orissa. This movement had provided the base for the participation of the people of the princely states of this province against autocratic rule in their states, especially in Dhenkanal. The ruling chiefs were absolute despots under the protective umbrella of the British Paramount power. They were arbitrary and autocratic in their administration. Their subjects had no taste of responsible Government and Fundamental Rights. In this distressful state of affairs the people in those states were suffering from despotic rule. This had come in the form of the Orissa States peoples Conference under the direction of Sarangadhar Das, as its Secretary. He had become the spirit and architect of the people's awakening and resurgence through his exhortation in peasants rallies held at different places from time to time. Sarangadhar Das, a subject of the state of Dhenkanal had suffered harassment from the state administration as a potential leader of the exploited and degraded subjects of the state. He had

shifted his seat of activity to Cuttack from where and as well from other places of British Orissa in close proximity to Dhenkanal, he could organise the peoples resistance movement against the autocratic chief of Dhenkanal. In this background, the Orissa States Peoples' Conference was formed with Sarangadhar Das as its Secretary. It had set up an Enquiry Committee to establish and redress the grievances of the people of Dhenkanal State. As part of this process, a *Prajamandal* was raised for the people of Dhenkanal on the 27th June 1938 outside the State at Cuttack. This was born as the sole representative body of the people of Dhenkanal to air and redress their grievances against the Dhenkanal *Darbar* (Raj). The members of the *Prajamandal*, returning to the State were looked upon as messengers of a new life for the exploited mass of the state. Then began a new phase of activity of the people. Hundreds of mass meetings were held in different localities of the state. People discussed their grievances and resolved in every meeting to fight for full responsible Government in the state. Volunteers spread the message-Cum-resolution of the meetings in all the villages of the state. Demands were made on the state for an inquiry into various illegal fines, exactions by certain officers, forcible confiscation of lands, restoration of the properties and punishment of the guilty officers. The foremost demands were establishment of Fundamental Rights and full responsible Government.[1]

The *Darbar* called many meetings to persuade the people to desist from this agitation. These meetings were almost unattended. On the other hand, meetings convened by the

Prajamandal were attended by thousands even from distant parts of the state. The state issued bulletins announcing certain concessions which produced little result for the people. As stated before, the Demand sheets were distributed all over the state by volunteers of the *Prajamandal*. After about a month of this act, a mass meeting of the *Prajamandal* was held at Jenapur on the Ist and 2nd September 1938 in Cuttack, quite close to the border of Dhenkanal under the Presidentship of Sarangadhar Das. Representatives of the people from Dhenkanal had come in thousands to listen to their leader, Mr. Das. The proceedings of the meeting displayed a quiet but determined enthusiasm which appeared surprising and unprecedented to those who knew the state of affairs in Dhenkanal for the last twelve years.[1]

The President fully explained the aims and objects of the *Prajamandal* and exhorted them to fight for their rights and remain absolutely non-violent in spite of every provocation. He congratulated them for having remained peaceful and united for the last two months. Several resolutions were unanimously carried with acclamation highlighting the demands and condemning the proposed federation in which the states people had no place. The second day of the conference was specially devoted to Dhenkanal and was known as the *Dhenkanal Day*. The meeting terminated with the singing of National songs and various slogans such as, "Down with absence of Law in the Garjats" and "Up with the power of the people". It was evident that a new life had taken hold of the dead bones of the simple villagers among whom the lowliest of the lowly was talking of the vote.

This rally of peasants was a huge demonstration of more than fifty thousand people of the countryside including some five thousand men from the state of Dhenkanal. The celebration was purely a demonstration of socialistic outburst. Congress leaders from Orissa with a socialist feeling were the key figures of this rally. For the people of Dhenkanal, this rally had become another source of new consciousness, new spirit, new zeal and enthusiasm adding to their awakening already born earlier. The five thousand men from the state had taken the pledge of achieving the objective raised in the meeting. This was a renewed inspiration for further action in the state against the *Darbar*.[2]

A few days before 11th September, the *Prajamandal* had drawn a new the attention of the *Darbar* to their demands. Negotiation between the two sides failed on the 11th September. The same day the President, Vice President and Secretary of the *Prajamandal* were arrested. The news of their arrest spreading everywhere in the state drew a vast crowd of twenty thousand into the state capital, Dhenkanal on the 12th instant. They demanded immediate release of their leaders. The situation developed to a state of confrontation. The state force in its entirety comprising police, magistrate, forest department officers, some of them on elephants, horses and motor cars waited to meet the enraged mass advancing into the town. The State authorities ordered a Lathi charge. They were also charged from the backs of elephants, horses and through motor cars. The state force was reinforced with armed contingents from Boudh, Sareikalla and Sikhs recruited under a *Punjabi* Officer from Calcutta to meet the situation. The crowd retaliated with brickbats and stones at

a certain stage. In the noon and afternoon, there were three firings. From reliable eyewitness account, there were four dead and a good number injured. The dead and the wounded were being carried on a lorry. Eight of the seriously wounded were rescued by Bhagabati Panigrahy and Malati Choudhury and taken to Cuttack and admitted in the General Hospital.

On receipt of information at Cuttack, Sarangadhar Das wired the President of the Eastern States Agency about the Dhenkanal firing on an unarmed demonstrating mob. Das accompanied by Naba Krushna Choudhury and Malati Devi reached Dhenkanal on the morning of 13th September. They persuaded the enraged people to maintain restraint and keep up the courage.[3]

On the 13th October, following the riot and firing, Sarangadhar Das addressed a gathering of 25 to 30 thousand people near the Garh-Dhenkanal station. Standing on the Railway embankment at about-11.30 A.M. he addressed the people. He said: "The inhuman treatment which you are receiving from the *Raja* was also meted to me when I was here. Our united stand to-day has terrified the *Raja* and his Government. We can wrest the reins of administration from the hands of the *Raja* if we can strengthen our unity and have our Government. To-day the Dhenkanal *Raj Sarkar* has killed the people with *lathis* and bullets. We must make the *Raja* shed tears and bow his head to us and make him surrender his Government to our hands. Raise memorials in memory of those, who have been killed to-day, as a symbol of oppression committed upon our brothers. Open training centres in every village and teach the youth the art of

lathi charge and knife display. When our people are well versed in this art, we can then obtain our liberty. Boycott the officials who are moving in the villages and those that are at the Headquarters. If need be, use force to drive them from the villages. The Government will collapse when the officials will leave their posts for fear of social boycott. Then only victory will be ours". He continued adding, "Don't beg for small mercies. Enter the forests and cut the reserved species of trees. Cut down the data trees from which excise revenue is derived. Destroy the *Madat (Ganja)* shop and the *Madat* manufacturing apparatus. Ask the *'madat'* smokers to smoke at their own houses. Don't go to the licenced *hats* to sell your merchandise. Desert the *hats* and sell at any place you like. The *Rajas* have no power in these days and they cannot obtain help from the Government. They have to depend on small force. Our united stand is the surest way to obtain self Government. I shall issue instructions from our office from time to time. Be bold, do not be afraid, have no fear for the jail or the handcuff. These cannot have any effect. Think of the mighty Congress Party of British India. How it has obtained self-Government? Think of their great feats and sacrifices, if they are capable of obtaining independence from the powerful British can we not obtain liberty from the *Raja* earlier than the British Indian Congress brethern"?[5] This speech of Sarangadhar Das must have raised the morale of the people after the murderous *lathi* charge and firing by the *Darbar*.

On the evening of 13th, Harmohan Patnaik, President of *Prajamandal* and Sarangadhar Das, Secretary, Orissa States peoples Conference were invited by the *Darbar* for negotiation.

The latter refused the *Raja's* invitation since there was no written request from the Darbar and the *Prajamandal* was not consulted in this connection.

As observed by the *Amrit Bazar Patrika* on its issue of 15.9.1938, the brave stand taken by 20,000 people in Dhenkanal town in spite of the *lathi* charge and charging with horses, elephants and motor cars and finally firing on Monday last (September-12) resulted in releasing political prisoners that very midnight. The strength of the people gave its full expression when over 50,000 heads assembled in a meeting yesterday morning to listen to the President of the Dhenkanal *Prajamandal* and to Sarangadhar Das who hurried to Dhenkanal on receipt of the news of firing. More people were pouring in from far off distances till evening. The Dhenkanal *Prajamandal* had taken up the challange of repression and had won their first victory.

The second phase of the rising was to come about a month after, i.e. on the 10th October of 1938. The first incident of this phase occurred on the 10th October in the village Bhuban. This was a very large village. Its people were mostly well to do and many were educated. During this movement, this village was the citadel of the revolution from the very start. The state authorities had issued warrants of arrest against eighteen persons of the village. On the night of 10th October, a Magistrate of the state was sent there accompanied by an armed force of forty under a Sub-Inspector of Police. The party arrived in the village at about twelve in the night. The reason was that the warrants could not be executed in day time when the concerned men generally absconded during the day hours. Reaching the village,

the police arrested eight of the persons. The villagers reacted in surrounding the police in overwhelming number. They demanded immediate release of the arrested persons. The crowd soon became uncontrollable. In the resulting confusion, a gun shot from somewhere was responded by the police for firing on the crowd.

In the firing two persons were killed on the spot. As the police left the place carrying the arrested persons, they were followed by the enraged villagers. The police chased by the villagers for about two miles reached the ferry ghat at Nilakanthapur and *boarded* a boat. But, the *ghatmen* refused to ferry the police party across the river. The chasing mob overturned the boat with the police party. The latter opened fire on the mob. Four persons were killed at the place including a father and his twelve years son called Baji Rout. The next firing in that night took place near the Hindol Railway station. The bodies of the six dead were taken to Cuttack and paraded in the streets of the city placing the bodies on bullock carts, one for each. This had aroused a tense atmosphere in the city.[6]

In defence of police action by the Dhenkanal *Darbar*, their Publicity Officer had issued a statement on the 11th October in which he stated that the police had to open fire on the villagers in self-defence and that the mob attacked the police and the Magistrate who went to Bhuban village for arresting several persons.

Challenging this statement of the Publicity Officer of the state, Sarangadhar Das presented his statement as follows. He

stated : "Not as a representative of the people of the state, but as a public man of Orissa, I challange the Publicity Officer of the Dhenkanal State to agree to an impartial Judicial Inquiry by a High Court Judge of any of the provincial High Courts of India before whom both parties will lay their cards on the table. And I make this assertion that if a single one of the statements contained in the press note under reference is proved true, I shall immolate myself from public life." Proceeding further Mr. Das stated : "With reference to the *lathi* charges and firing on an unarmed and absolutely non-violent crowd on the 11th and 12th September, I had made the challange several times both in the press and platform. The *Darbar* had announced on the 15th September, 1938, the setting up of a Committee for the purpose of inquiry into the allegations. But, where is the Committee and why it has not been appointed so that true facts might have been seen in the light of the day".[7]

In the wake of the Bhuban firing on 10th October, all the different parties concerned with the Dhenkanal rising issued a call for the observance of the *Gadjat Day* on 29th October. This was observed in many places particularly at Cuttack through processions and public meetings. In the Cuttack meeting, Sarangadhar Das spoke in presenting the picture of a collaboration of British imperialism with the feudal autocracy of the princely states. Among other things, Das emphasised the merger of these states Orissa. This is known from the following report of his speech at Cuttack during the observance of the *'Garjat Day'*. As reported, he said: "In a garden party at Cuttack he found a map of Orissa in which the Feudatory States were

painted in black. He met the *Rajas* of Kanika and Talcher. He enquired the *Raja* of Kanika why the map was painted so? Was it meant to show that they were the darkest part of Orissa? The *Raja* of Kanika had suggested him to make them all red. The speaker said that miraculously those words of the *Raja* of Kanika were going to happen. The recent happenings in the state showed that in no time the states should be merged in the British territory and the map should soon be painted red. There was no difference between those who were in the States and those who were in British India and therefore there was no reason why there should be a different administration. He then thanked the people of British India for their sympathy and help and assured them that they should also get the same in return when they would involve themselves in a struggle for freedom."[8]

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16

THE MERGER OF MAYURBHANJ

Prabodha Kumar Mishra

Mayurbhanj was the premier Princely state of Orissa ruled by the Bhanja dynasty for over one thousand years before her merger with Orissa province in 1949. Ever since the Simon Commission recommendation in 1930 that "The Orissa feudatory States which are not part of British India should be brought in to relationship with any administration setup for Orissa"[1] There was a strong possibility of the merger of the Princely States with the Orissa Province created in 1936. Although the Oriya-speaking people were keen for a linguistic union of the territories inhabited by them, the separate administration of the twenty four Feudatory states always stood a stumbling block against their desire. For making the new province economically viable the administrative integration of these feudatory states with the newly created province was highly essential.[2] In the 1930s the *Prajamandal* movement in the States was in full swing to press the demand for social and agrarian reforms. The Congress Party in Orissa under the leadership of Mahtab etc. had lent its covert support to the movement. Mahtab and his associates were convinced that the benefit of freedom can not be enjoyed by the people of the *Garjat* States unless and until they were liberated from feudal rule of the

Rajas and brought under the liberal administration of the Congress Party.[3] As the Chairman of the Orissa States Enquiry Committee he was well aware of the problems and gross anomalies which had prevailed in the feudal administration of the *Rajas*. Public opinion was in support of Mahtab's contention.

In 1946 Mahtab took up the matter with the Cabinet Mission to convince the members that the Orissa States being one economic, political, geographical and linguistic unit with a common history should be integrated with the province.[4] He advanced many other arguments in a memorandum which did not bear fruit.[5] As Premier of Orissa he broached the issue before the rulers of the feudatory states in order to persuade them to merge with the province.[6] The rulers, however, had different plan incompatible to the ideas of Mahtab.[7] Notwithstanding the clandestine interest of some of the rulers, the States merged with Orissa on 14 December 1947 excepting Mayurbhanj.[8]

The *Maharaja* of Mayurbhanj (Pratap Chandra Bhanj Deo) was a very practical man. He was not swayed away by the *Maharajas* of Bolangir-Patna and Kalahandi in their plan to form the Eastern States union before the signing of the instruments of Merger. He was of the opinion that the rulers of the feudatory states were the relics of feudalism and anachronism in the new emerging structure of Independent India.[9] He wrote to the Nawab of Bhopal on 19 September 1946,

> One result of the British policy towards the Indian states, whether deliberately intended or not, has been to undermine the authority of the Rulers over their

> people. Our people have thus been gradually alienated from us. British India, again, while befriending the cause of our people has painted us as mischievous relics of an archaic system which is propped up by the British authorities merely for their own purpose.[10]

The *Maharaja* did not want to alienate his people and decided to handover power to the *Prajamandal* leader. Mayurbhanj was a focal point of *Prajamandal* movement under the active leadership of *Sarat Chandra* Das, popularly known as *Sarat Gandhi*. The transfer of power to the popular Government headed by Sarat Das took place on 10 December 1947.[11] Therefore, on 14 December 47 when Sardar Patel called upon the Rulers to accept the instrument of merger at Cuttack for a peaceful integration of the Feudatory States, the *Maharaja* explained his inability to sign the document since he was not the rightful authority to do so. Sardar Patel accepted the situation with a warning to the effect that in future the position of Mayurbhanj would take such a bad shape that the *Maharaja* would have to regret for staying away from the merger scheme.[12] Thus, while all other Oriya Feudatory States merged with the Orissa province with effect from 1st January 1948 Mayurbhanj alone had to remain excluded.

But soon afterwards the political situation in Mayurbhanj took a very serious turn. The tribals of Mayurbhanj did not wish to merge with Orissa. In a meeting held on 25 December 1947, presided over by Sunaram Majhi, a young tribal lawyer the following resolution was passed,[13]

> The question of merger of Mayurbhanj State with Orissa must not arise as the people believed that the progress of the state would be ensured under the newly established responsible Government.

Though there was sustained propaganda efforts to persuade the leaders of Mayurbhanj to merge with Orissa, Sarat Chandra Das was against any such move. He felt that separate existence of Mayurbhanj would ensure her rapid economic growth.[14] Lalmohan Pati and Pranakrushna Jena, two eminent public figures of the state expressed their view that any question of merger would provoke the people to launch protest and resistance movement. Considering her area, population, income, natural resources and the stability of popular Government they ruled out the possibility of merger.[15] But notwithstanding the above, the Government of Sarat Chandra Das gradually became unpopular. For the indiscretion of the officials and mismanagement of the public exchequer, the popular Ministry lost respect of the people.[16] Sarat Chandra Das failed to maintain coherences in the Ministry. He named the state unit of the *Prajamandal* as Mayurbhanj State Congress. Some of his compatriots demanded the State Unit of the Congress for affiliation with the Provincial Congress Committee.[17] Das was accused of misappropriating funds of the *Gandhi Smarak Samiti.* The abolition of the *Sardari* system had annoyed the *Sardars* who were unhappy over the loss of their feudal prerogatives. They supported the newly formed *'Bhanjabasi'* party of Haris Chandra Das and demanded merger with Orissa.[18]

A consensus arose among the elites and politicians that the separate existence of Mayurbhanj was harmful to the interests of Oriya Community. In a discussion with Sarat Chandra Das, the Praja socialist leaders like Rabindra Mohan Das of Balasore and Surendra Nath Dwibedy resolved to articulate public opinion in favour of the merger of Mayurbhanj.[19] The Orissa Legislative Assembly in a Resolution passed in April, 1948 moved the central Government to take steps for the integration of Mayurbhanj so as to enable the people of the State to participate in the democratic structure of the Orissa province.[20] But the reaction of the Government of Sarat Chandra Das was an indication of their disapproval. The *Vyavastha Parishad* passed a Resolution stating

> "The Constituent Assembly declares its firm and solemn resolve to proclaim the state of Mayurbhanj as an autonomous unit within the Indian union and to draw up for her future Governance a constitution for the establishment of full responsible Government under the aegis of the Ruler".[21]

The attitude of the Orissa Legislative Assembly was not appreciated by the State people. In protest they reiterated their determination to preserve the separate identity. In August 1948 Das and some of his colleagues went to New Delhi to hold talk with the States Ministry and to finish an account of their achievements.[22] Both V.P. Menon and Sardar Patel suggested Das to agree for merger and to convince his people about the problems of separate existence delinked from the mainstream of the Oriya Community.[23]

A disappointed Das on his return from New Delhi convened a meeting of the Constituent Assembly of the State where he informed the House the substance of his Delhi talk. With great humility he informed that he could not convince the Government of India the justification of keeping Mayurbhanj as autonomous State.

> But the top men in the Government who are moulding the destinies of resurrected India gave us the impression that they did not look at it with the same eye as ourselves, as they felt that small units would rather create hindrance than help in the work of consolidation and progress. It is for everybody to think in terms of India, to stand united and fall in line with the policy of the Government of India enunciated by our respected leaders. Utkal, with which our education has been linked from time immemorial and whose language we are using in our Courts, is welcoming us with open arms. I now appeal to you all to take a long range view of things, cooly ponder over all aspects of the question as stated before, and shape the destiny of Mayurbhanj on right lines.[24]

This speech brought about a perceptible change in the attitude. Though the file in the thinking of the Government appeared to have taken a pro-merger stance, the over all desire of the people was yet unknown. Campaign against Das Ministry intensified. While the tribals of Bamanghaty sub-division felt restless, some eminent members of the State legislative spoke in

favour of merger.[25] There was political confusion when the Tribals memorialised the Government of India requesting for the assumption of administrative power as they had no trust on Das and did not want to merge with Orissa.[26]

During this critical movement the Cuttack press published a news saying that Sarat Chandra Das wanted to resign after making Sunaram Majhi his successor and leader of the Constituent Assembly. [27] Majhi was too well-known for his desire to oppose the merger proposal with Orissa. [28] Under such growing confusion a third group emerged in Mayurbhanj expressing its desire to merge the State with west Bengal. But the idea was scoffed at by the Chief Minister, Prafulla Chandra Ghose who termed the ideas as 'ridiculous'.[29] The situation called for an immediate intervention by the *Maharaja* and he discussed the matter with K.C. Niyogi, his former Dewan and a minister in the Central Government.[30] Sunaram Majhi openly revolted with the support of the tribals demanding merger with Bihar. He was of the firm belief that Mayurbhanj as a part of Bihar would serve the cause of the tribals better. His revolt gained momentum and popularity in the Bamanghaty Subdivision which is adjacent to Bihar.[31] The Congress Party in Mayurbhanj opposed this move tooth and nail and began to articulate public opinion by pointing out that[32] :

a) There would be language problem because Bihar was a Hindi province

b) Patna, the Capital of Bihar would be far away from Mayurbhanj and since there was no good system of

communication the tribal's interest could not be served well and effectively.

c) Integration with Orissa would be culturally, historically, economically and administratively convenient and compatible but not with Bihar.

On 16 October 1948 the Maharaja signed the instrument of merger in New Delhi. D.V.Regs, ICS, took over the administration of the state on 9 November as the Chief Commissioner.[33] Mayurbhanj became a part of the Indian union as centrally administered unit. The *Vyavastha Parishad* and the Constituent Assembly were dissolved immediately. The Government notification said that all local laws, regulations and orders would continue to be in force until further orders.[34] Thus, the administration was taken care of the Government of India when the tribal revolt was assuming a dangerous proportion. V.P. Menon visited Baripada on 16 December to explain to the people that the overwhelming desire of the people of Mayurbhanj was for merger with Orissa. He brushed aside the arguments of the Adivasis contained in their memorandum to the Government of India as highly unreasonable.[35] To allay their fears of negligence he told the Adivasi leaders that :

> The Government of India will see and the Orissa Government will see that the lot of the adivasis is improved and that every fair chance is given to them.

He announced that Mayurbhanj would merge with Orissa on 1 January 1949.[36] From 2 January 1949 Mayurbhanj became a district of the Orissa Province.

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17

RESOLUTION OF THE 'CRISIS OF PARTICIPATION' : AN OVERVIEW OF THE STATE PEOPLES MOVEMENT IN MAYURBHANJ AND ITS MERGER

Surya Kant Nath

Whenever one comes across the State Peoples Movement and their merger the first thing that inevitably strikes is the inhuman and barbaric rule of autocrats under whose administration the people suffered unheard of and unbelievable miseries. The Orissa States witnessed repression and misrule on a scale (probably) unparalleled in any other group of states in India.[1] Peasants were crushed by the heavy burden of fines, exactions and forced labour which came in the form of *Bethi-Begar* (unpaid forced labour), *Rasad* (forced requisition of provisions), *Magan* (compulsory contribution), *Bheti* (forced presents), unlawful collection of money and various other monopolies enjoyed by the government. The situation was made worse by the fact that there was no semblence of civil liberties, rule of law or an impartial judiciary which could guarantee safety of life and property in the State. "The regime of the Indian

princedoms" wrote R.P. Dutta, "Provides the extreme, oppression and misery without parallel in the modern world".[2]

This characterization, however, much true of other Princely States is singularly inapplicable to Mayurbhanj State. In 1938-39, a time when Dhenkanal, Talcher and Nilgiri were being convulsed by popular rebellions, Mayurbhanj was relatively quiet. This however doesn't be-little the fact that the people of Mayurbhanj contributed their lot in their own way in transforming an autocratic monarchy into a democratic polity. This paper attempts, what can atbest be, called a bird's eye view of the events of the decade preceding the merger and a theoritical interpretation of the peoples' movement in Mayurbhanj.

During 1938 a mass upsurge convulsed the Princely States all over India. This was primarily because of the fact that the States were autocratic and more importantly, 'non-participant systems' where "the children of the Rulers became Rulers while the children of the Ruled assumed that they would continue to be Ruled by others": Mayurbhanj was the biggest of the Orissa group of princely states and in 1938, was ruled by *Maharaja* Pratap Chandra Bhanj Deo. He was a benevolent autocrat but this didn't compensate for the fact that people had no role in the administration and all powers were concentrated in the hands of the *Maharaja*. So, under the banner of a political organisation, the people of Mayurbhanj launched an opposition movement demanding a reconstruction of the existing autocratic polity. Their vision was a political system, where the rulers would be elected by the ruled and be accountable to them. The demands of the people were not acceptable to the authorities for they know

pretty well that any concession to such demands would mean the destruction of the status-quo and the loss of their privileged positions.

With the protagonists of the conflict maintaining such contrasting positions, a crisis was bound to ensue - a 'crisis of participation'.[3] The crisis stemmed from a situation where the subjects on one hand rejected the *Maharaja's* hereditary prerogative to rule and the *Maharaja* on the other hand was scarcely ready to forego this prerogative. The stimuli for this political action came from *Mayurbhanj's* internal as well as external environments. The crisis of participation deepened as the *Praja Mandal's* sway gradually spread to the length and breadth of the principality.

The participatory demands of the peoples movement in Mayurbhanj created a 'crisis of participation' and the situation can be best explained by a theory of 'relative deprivation'. Revolution occurs when there is complete denial of any space to the people or when there is total deprivation of the basic amenities of life. But qualitative change in shape of reforms take place when there is a relative deprivation.[4]

However, the case of Mayurbhanj can also be linked to a broader issue in political science - the problem of systemic change or what is called "between - system change".[5]

The cultural explanation of the systemic change implies that a certain ideology may inspire people to work for the destruction of the existing political order in order to implement the vision of a new one. A small elite, often charismatic, can mobilize the whole society towards new political goals. And a

sense of deprivation and the realization of the goals may impel the people to demand a fundamental change in the rules of the political game and forge a new polity.

The structural explanation[6] of the systemic change on the other hand implies that a political regime is likely to disintegrate if it loses the support of social groups allied with it, is unable to use coercion against opponents and no longer retains the support of foreign institutions.[7] An opposition which develops organisational solidarity, gains support of groups formerly allied with the government and with foreign backing may topple an existing regime.[8]

It is not an easy task to find an answer to the question : why does an existing political system break down ? But with regard to Mayurbhanj at this juncture, these two theories would probably suffice with a certain degree of conviction that the people succeeded in transforming an autocratic monarchy to a democratic polity because they gradually realized their relative deprivation and intended to transform it into a government, in which the people could participate. The government disintegrated because it lost the support of the people. And finally, it had to surrender absolute power when it lost the support of foreign institutions (in this case, the support of the Paramount Power, i.e. British). Foreign backing (support rendered by the Congress ruled British Orissa) also went a long way in toppling the government.

A praise worthy feature of the People's Movement to resolve the crisis of participation was that unlike his no torious

counterparts elsewhere, the *Maharaja* and the princely authorities were extremely reluctant to invoke repression to deal with anti-regime activities. They sought to cope with the 'participation crisis' through a slow process of democratisation. It is of course another thing that this symbolic transfer of real power did not satisfy the people. They found little justification in the *Maharaja's* right to rule and were not willing to be impressed by the cosmetic changes being brought about by the existing polity. However, the attitude of the *Maharaja* and the authorities had a telling impact on the agitating people and unlike the movements in Dhenkanal and Talcher, their movement was subtle, democratic and not directed at the *Maharaja's* throat.

Apart from the internal impulses to the Peoples Movement in Mayurbhanj like modernizing changes which came in the form of Western education, transport communication, press, media and political institutions (State Council, Praja Sabhas, Baripada municipality), the events, situations and institutions in Mayurbhanj's external environment also spurred, encouraged and supported the opposition movement against monarchical legitimacy both in psychological and material terms. The issues and events from British Orissa and other Princely States acted as external impulses to Mayurbhanj politics. The immediate cause of this convulsion lay beyond Mayurbhanj's border, i.e. in a political upheaval that a number of princely states in Orissa had experienced in the summer of 1938.

For any movement to be successful, the people must be awakened and their political apathy destroyed. In Mayurbhanj the *Praja Mandal* leaders realized that they had no over -

reaching social or economic issues to mobilize the docile population. Hence, they had to use, what Robert W. Stern calls, nationalism as a 'Sentiment - resource' and local grievances as 'indigenous resources' to stir the quiescent masses to political action. Politicians in princely India used nationalist resources as they used imperialist and indigenous resources.[10]

The people of Mayurbhanj and those of other Orissa States were united by a common language and a culture. Besides, Mayurbhanj shared ties of dynasty and common borders with several of these States. Naturally, the pattern of events in Orissa States became an input into Mayurbhanj politics. It provided the immediate stimulus to the *Praja Mandal* to stand up and speak to men who had long desired to mount a popular challenge to the princely autocracy in Mayurbhanj.

A novel feature of the Peoples Movement in Mayurbhanj was that the *Praja Mandal* conducted its agitation on peaceful lines. The peaceful nature of the movement was facilitated by the *Maharaja's* indulgent attitude towards and his reluctance to invoke the brutal might of the state to suppress the campaign for popular legitimacy. During the eight year period that *Praja Mandalities* conducted their struggle, not a single shot was fired and not a drop of blood shed. The people of Mayurbhanj also reciprocated by targeting the institution of monarchy but not the monarch. In 1946, when the 'crisis of participation' was in the process of being resolved, the *Praja Mandal* emerged as a redoubtable force eclipsing all rival outfits like *Praja Mangal* and *Praja Sabha*.

During 1946-47, the political scenario at the all India

arena underwent sea changes. The nature and pace of political events in Mayurbhanj during this period was primarily a reaction to the rapidly unfolding drama at the national level. The political forces operating in the external environment not only precipitated an apparent resolution of the crisis of participation but also ultimately, led to the extinction of Mayurbhanj as a separate, semi-sovereign state with a recorded history of 2000 years.[11]

How this came about is the subject matter dealt with in the following pages.

The end of the World War II witnessed critical changes in the all India arena. The British expressed their desire to take India towards her goal of self - government[12], and this spurred the princes on to a reflection on the future of their own States. A very significant event in this light was the formation of Congress ministries in 1946 which was an encouraging development for the States Peoples Movement for democracy. Emergence of democratic governments in the very next door of Orissa States heightened the sense of deprivation of the people of those states and it reminded them of their less fortunate situation under the undemocratic regimes of the *Rajas* and *Maharajas*.

A very positive aspect for the peoples movement in Mayurbhanj was that *Maharaja* Pratap Chandra Bhanj Deo was not blind to the ground realities. He knew that the urge for democracy was sweeping through the whole of princely India and was convinced that repression was not the way to deal with the crisis. He even harped on the idea of voluntary abdication of the ruling authority as a possible solution.

However, it is a moot point that the alternatives *Maharaja* Pratap Chandra talked of, had to wait for more than a year for being translated into reality. Two possible considerations influenced *Maharaja's* actions at this point of time. Probably he did not want to commit himself to any course of action until the relationship between the Princely States and British India was made clear in the proposed constitutional structure for an independent India. Secondly, the *Maharaja* probably felt that the crisis in his State had not assumed alarming proportions. Thus the *Maharaja* adopted an wait and see policy even when he was clear about the final outcome.

In December 1946, the Constituent Assembly resolved to establish an independent, Sovereign Republic incorporating British India and Princely States. Its declaration that powers and authority of such a republic would be derived from the people caused disquiet among the princes[13] who were engaged in intense deliberations regarding whether to join the assembly. While laying down their conditions for participation in the Constituent Assembly, they made it clear in the resolution of 29 January 1947 at New Delhi that the Union Government would exercise such powers as were experssly assigned to it by the States and that the constitutions of each State, its territorial integrity and the succession of its ruling dynasty in accordance with customs, law and usage of the State should not be interfered with by the Union or any unit thereof.[14] Complicated negotiations ensued as the rulers, in a sense, did not want their autocratic positions to be violated.

A significant development in the meantime was the

installation of a Provisional Government led by the Congress in September 1946. The presence of a Congress ministry in Delhi changed the perceptions of the opponents of princely regimes in the State level arenas and made the *Rajas* increasingly apprehensive about their safety in case of internal rebellion.[15] This apprehension became overwhelming when the Nehru Cabinet took over on 15th August 1947. The lifeline to the *Raj* was cut and the rulers were left vulnerable to the popular wrath.[16] Infact, the princes awareness of this possibility forced them to capitulate to popular movements in the state-level arenas.

The announcement on 20th February 1947 that the British would leave India by June next year encouraged the *Praja Mandal* to intensify its struggle against princely autocracy. The working committee of the Mayurbhanj *Praja Mandal* met at Ambjoda in May 1947 and the leaders who had gathered there, felt that the time had arrived to step up pressure on the princely government. A decision to launch a Non-Cooperation Movement by boycotting the law courts and the elections to the *Praja Sabhas* was taken. The working committee served an ultimatum to the government asking it to transfer all powers to the people. The *Praja Mandal's* annual conference at Pratappur on 14th May 1947 endorsed the decision.[17]

The boycott campaign was carried out in the major administrative centres like Baripada, Betanati, Udala, Karanjia and Rairangpur. It was so successful in Udala that not a single petition was filed in the court of the sub-Divisional Officer (S.D.O.).[18]

While the political scenario at the national level was still in a flux, Mountbatten made the 4th June 1947 announcement that the British Government would relinquish power by 15th August 1947. Unmindful of the geographic, economic and historical compulsions, a number of States made moves to stay as Sovereign entities after the lapse of Paramountcy.[19] The final blow came when as per the Indian Independence Act, States were released from obligations to the Paramount Power. The States were free to join either of the two Dominions or remain independent after 15th August 1947.[20] The British, however, urged the princes to ally themselves with the appropriate Dominion.[21]

By 15th August 1947, all the States except Junagad, two small Kathiawar States, Hyderabad and Kashmir had signed the Instruments of Accession by which they agreed to acceede to India or Pakistan.[22] Mayurbhanj now became a separate constituent unit of the Federal Union of India.

The advent of independence on 15th August 1947 was welcomed by the Mayurbhanj *Praja Mandal* and that day it organised a 1,00,000 strong rally at Madhuban[23] (Baripada's Hyde Park). The residents of Baripada had never seen such an awesome crowd. The Congress flag was hoisted by Sarat Chandra Das, the supreme leader of the *Praja Mandal* and the jubilant crowd expressed joy over the withdrawal of the alien rulers from India. The *Praja Mandal* leader also used the rally to convey the message to the authorities that it should immediately recognize the principle of popular sovereignty.

Maharaja Pratap Chandra was reminded that he should

not wait till he was actually told to go by his own people and that very day he unveiled a programme of constitutional reforms.

The *Maharaja* suggested radical reforms of the legislature and the appointment of ministers from among the elected representatives. Even when he had the capacity to send the *Praja Mandal* leaders to desperation, he choose not to do so because he felt "..... it would cause deep anguish to be driven in any circumstances to fight my own people to whose welfare I have devoted most of my life and energy".[24]

On recommendations of the *Kendra Parishad*, a Constituent Assembly comprising of fifty one chosen representatives of the people was established and it was to frame a new constitution for Mayurbhanj, as it was a separate unit acceding to Indian Union. The list of fifty one representatives had been prepared by the *Praja Mandal* which besides selecting a majority of its men, had taken care to incorporate leaders of the loyalist body, the *Praja Mangal*, tribal bodies and a few non party figures.[25]

The *Kendra Parishad* reserved certain subjects for the Ruler and placed them beyond the purview of the Constituent Assembly. They were :[26]

1. The ruler himself and his consort, the ruling family of Mayurbhanj in succession to the throne, ruler's prerogatives, his civil list, his staff and other expenses, education allowances of heir apparent and heir presumptive, personal allowances of the other members of the ruling family and social and religious charges borne on

the budget of the domestic department.

2. Summoring and dissolving of the legislature.

3. Control of expenditure from the reserves as standing on the date of the inauguration of the new constitution and the income there from.

4. Residuary powers and emergency powers in case of break down of the constitution.

Since these reservations placed restrictions on the free exercise of the Constituent Assembly's powers, *Maharaja* Pratap Chandra, in true spirit of a democrat, declined the prerogatives. He announced in the second session of the Constituent Assembly:

:

.... in view of the declared goal (of a wholly popular form of government) it is not my desire that any subject should be specially reserved in this matter.[27]

On 8th December 1947, the Constituent Assembly recommended the introduction of responsible government in the State pending the formulation of a constitution by it.[28] The recommendation was given effect the next day when *Maharaja* Pratap Chandra proclaimed an interim constitution for establishing a parliamentary form of government.[29] The *Kendra Parishad* was abolished by the Royal Order on the same day.

The interim constitution provided that the fifty one Member Constituent Assembly would serve as the legislature of the State[30] and in its new role as the legislature it was to be known as the *Vyabastha Parishad*.

On 10th December 1947, the *Maharaja* signed away the prerogatives of the princely house of Mayurbhanj and the same day he transferred all powers to a popular ministry.[31] At the head of ministry was Sarat Chandra Das, who was designated as the Premier. His two other ministers were Bidyadhar Mohapatra and Maheswar Naik.[32] As head of the state, the *Maharaja* was to perform largely a ceremonial role and a Constitutional Monarchy was thus established in Mayurbhanj.

In the final settlement of the 'Crisis of participation' the monarchical legitimacy was repudiated and popular legitimacy accepted because of the Princely authorities acquiescence in the demands of the people for political participation. In the new system the people were to be the source of all authority.

One million people of Mayurbhanj went on shaping their destiny as an autonomous unit of the Indian Union. But the continued existence of the newly established democratic institutions received a severe jolt when Deputy Prime Minister of India, Sardar Patel met the rulers of the Orissa States at Cuttack on 14th December 1947 and raised the question of merger. Though other rulers had shown reluctance initially and later chosen to merge their states with Orissa Province, *Maharaja* Pratap Chandra did not commit himself to any action without consulting his ministers to whom, he argued, all power had been transferred.[33]

Everything seemed uncertain and ambiguous as by morning of 15th December 1947, Mayurbhanj was the only State which had not signed the instrument of merger. The people of

Mayurbhanj valued their autonomous status highly and to a resolution of Orissa Assembly suggesting Mayurbhanj's merger with Orissa vehement protests were raised by the *Vyabastha Parishad*.[34]

The national leaders who were 'moulding the destinies of a resurrected India[35] were not favourably disposed towards the continuance of small autonomous units like Mayurbhanj and they felt that "small units would rather create hindrance than help in the work of consolidation and progress which was so necessary for the betterment of the nation.[36]

Sarat Chandra Das, the Premier, accompanied by a party of seven members of *Vyabastha Parishad*, visited New Delhi during 12-18 August 1948. They met Sardar Patel, the Deputy Prime Minister and V.P. Menon, Secretary to the States Ministry and acquainted them with the progress achieved in the State since the transfer of power from the ruler to the people . The States ministry, however, raised the issue of merger of Mayurbhanj with Orissa and advised the Premier to explain to the people, "the dangers and difficulties in Mayurbhanj continuing as a separate entity".

The party came back home. Premier Das explained his Delhi talks to the *Vyabastha Parishad* and appealed to the members to "take long range view of things, cooly ponder over..... and shape the destiny of Mayurbhanj on right lines".[38]

The *Vyabastha Parishad* approved the merger resolution with a three-fourth majority[39] and as requested by the Premier *Maharaja* Pratap Chandra signed the Instrument of Merger on 17th October 1948.[40]

The Government of India took over the administration of Mayurbhanj on 9th November 1948 and it decided in favour of amalgamation of Mayurbhanj with Orissa which took place officially on 1st January 1948, when Mayurbhanj became a district of Orissa.[41]

The eleven month old experiment in Constitutional Monarchy reached an abrupt end but the relevance of David Hardiman's remark on Baroda very well suits the events in Mayurbhanj:

A distinctive and successful political entity had been swept away not because it had failed or become riddled with anachronism but because of events outside its border.[42]

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1. R.L. Handa, *History of Freedom Struggle in Princely States*, New Delhi : 1968, p.226.

2. R.P. Dutt, *India Today*, Calcutta : 1986, pp.447-448.

3. A 'Crisis of participation occurs when the incumbent elite: views the demands of individuals and groups seeking to participate in the political system as illegitimate". The reverse situation in which the aspiring participants reject the right of the incumbent elite to rule as illegitimate can also create a 'participation crisis'.

   Leonard Binder et. al., *Crises and Sequences in Political Development*, Princeton, NJ : 1971, p.165.

4. The Relative Deprivation theory argues that a sense of inequality and deprivation results when individuals or groups feel that others have better access to the advantages

of society. This feeling may impel them to political action.

Herbert Marcuse, 'Liberation from the A fluent society' in David Cooper ed. *The Dialectics of Liberation* Middle sex, England : 1968, p.177. This can be very well compared with a theory of complete denial and deprivation which was in vogue in states like Dhenkanal and Talcher which witnessed attempts to bring about a quantitative change through violence.

5. Charles F. Andrain, *Political change in the Third World,* Boston : 1988, p.58.

6. *Ibid*, pp.58-59.

7. The support can be in the form of political aid or economic assistance and can even include transational institutions like IMF and World Bank or the UN.

8. Charled Andrain, Op.cit., p.59.

9. Robert W. Stern, "An approach to politics in the princely States "in Robin Jeffrey ed., *People, Princes and Paramount Power*., Delhi, OUP : 1978, p.366 and 367.

10. *Ibid*, p.367.

11. Sir W.W.Hunter Writes on Mayurbhanj in his "Orissa" Vol. II, 1872 : "The Chronicles relate that the Principality was founded more than two thousand years ago". *See Report on the Administration of Mayurbhanj for 1944-45* Baripada : 1946, Appendix.

12. On 15th June 1945 Lord Wavell, Viceroy of India, announced Britain's desire to grant India her self-government. After the labour party came to power, it was announced that "the British Government was determined to do their utmost in conjunction with the leaders of Indian

opinion for the early realization of self-government in India." Quoted in Urmila Phadnis, *Towards the Integration of Indian States, 1919-1947*, Bombay : 1968, p.152.

13. *Ibid*, p.165.

14. *Ibid*, pp. 165-166

15. Citing Mysore's example James Manor has written that "the installation of interim government changed the princely authorities' perception of their relationship with New Delhi". James Manor, *Political Change in an Indian State : Mysore, 1917-1955*, New Delhi : 1977, p.161.

16. Sardar Patel brought this point home while urging them to merge their States with Orissa. He told them at Cuttack on 14th December 1947, "If this advice was not listened to, the princes would soon have to come to Delhi after being chased by their people and he might not be in a position to help them as things might have gone too far "Quoted in Satyabhama Pati, *Democratic Movements in India* Delhi : 1987, p.153.

17. Dipak Kumar Sarangi, Peoples Movement in Mayurbhanj presented in a Seminar on "People's movement in former Princely states of Orissa", Organised by P.G. Department of History, Utkal University, p.13.

18. *Ibid*, p.13.

19. Bhopal, Hyderabad and Travancore were some of these states.

20. R.C.Agarwal, *Constitutional Development of India and National Movement*, New Delhi : 1986, p.297.

21. James Manor, Op.cit., p.152.

22. Urmila Phadnis, Op.cit., p.196.

23. Prasanna Kumar Das, *Mayurbhanj Mukti Sangramara Sankshipta Itihas*, Cuttack : 1987, P.53.

24. Maharaja of Mayurbhanj to the Nawab of Bhopal, 19 September 1946 Quoted in Harekrushna Mahtab, *Beginning of the End*, Cuttack : 1972, p.47.

25. Prasanna Kumar Das, Op.Cit, p.54.

26. *Mayurbhanj State Gazettee*, 18 October 1947.

27. *Mayurbhanj State Gazettee*, 9 December, 1947.

29. *Ibid*.

30. *Ibid*.

31. Susanta Kumar Patra, *Tribal and Political movements in Mayurbhanj State*, Sambalpur University, Unpublished M.Phil thesis, 1981, p.89.

32. Prasanna Kumar Das, Op. cit. p.54.

33. Harekrushna mahtab, Op.cit, p.30.

34. *Mayurbhanj State Gazettee*, 16 September 1948.

35. Sarat Chandra Das's address to the *Vyabastha Parishad* on 15th September 1948.

36. *Ibid*.

37. *Mayurbhanj State Gazettee*, 21st August 1948.

38. Sarat Chandra Das's Address to the *Vyabastha Parishad* on 15th September 1948, Quoted in *Mayurbhanj State Gazette*, 16th September 1948.

39. Prasanna Kumar Das, Op.cit., p.59.

40. *Mayurbhanj State Gazettee*, 8th November 1948.

41. Nilamani Senapati and Dr. N.K. Sahu ed, *Orissa District Gazetteers : Mayurbhanj*, Orissa Government Press, Cuttack : 1967, p.83.

42. David Hardiman, "Baroda : The struggle of a 'progressive State' "in Robin Jeffrey ed, *People, Princes and Paramount Power*, Delhi, OUP : 1978, p.107.

18

THE MERGER OF THE PRINCELY STATES WITH ORISSA MAYURBHANJ : A BRIEF ACCOUNT

Santosh Kumar Sethi

The decision to set up the new States Department was followed by an important communication from Jawaharlal Nehru to Lord Mountbatten setting out his views with regard to the functions of the new States Department. A few days later, Sardar Ballabhai Patel, appointed V.P. Menon as the Secretary of the States Department and on 5 July 1947 the States Department was formally inaugurated.[1]

So far Orissa is concerned, the States were twenty six in number-'A' class - Eleven. 'B' class - Twelve and 'C' class - Three exercising varying degrees of jurisdiction.

The origin of the States of Orissa is obscure. Some of the rulers were descended from Rajput pilgrims who, having come on pilgrimage to Puri, stopped on their way back and carved out principalities from themselves, while others were descended

from petty aboriginal chiefs. Most of them were under the Suzerainty of the Mughals and later under the Maratha Bhonslas of Nagpur. When they came under the Suzerainty of the English Government, doubts cropped up as to their rightful status. Their recognition as rulers was eventually conceded to them, in case of the Orissa States in 1888. The Provincial Governments were nevertheless inclined to treat them as *Zamindars* and none of them exercised the same measure of internal Sovereignty as the rulers of the older had more firmly established States. In most of these States there had been prolonged periods of minority administration, where an officer responsible to the Political Agent was in charge. Even otherwise, there were Agency Officials in charge of important departments.

Mayurbhanj, the biggest State of Orissa had an area of 4,000 square miles and population of about 10 lakhs. It may be noted here that excellent iron ore is available in Mayurbhanj.

When India attained Independence on the 15th August 1947, the British Paramountcy in respect of the Indian states lapsed and the State of Mayurbhanj became an independent unit with effect from that date. Soon after the transfer of power from the British hands a Mayurbhanj State Legislative Assembly was constituted with Sarat Chandra Das as the Premeier of the State. He was a leader of the *Prajamandal* Party while later on came to be known as the Mayurbhanj State Congress.[2]

Sardar Patel summoned the rulers of Orissa Feudatory States to meet him at Cuttack on 14 December 1947. Besides the

rulers of the Feudatory States, there were Sardar Patel, Harekrushna Mahtab, K.V.K. Sundaran, I.C.S. of the Law Ministry, the Regional Commissioner for the Eastern States, V. Sankar, I.C.S., Sardar Patel's Private Secretary, V.P. Menon, Secretary, Ministry of States, the Revenue Commissioner and the Chief Secretary of Orissa. Patel inaugurated the proceedings with a most persuasive speech. He said that the safety of the rulers as well as of the people was in danger in Orissa and he had come to Cuttack to tender friendly advice to the rulers, not as a representative of the old Paramountcy or of any foreign power, but as a member of a family trying to solve a family problem. Orissa as a federal unit could only thrive and progress if it was a compact whole and was not torn as under by multifarious jurisdictions and authorities which ruined its compactness.... .

After his speech, when Patel met the rulers of 'A' Class States, the *Maharaja* of Mayurbhanj said that he had already granted responsible government in his State and that a ministry was functioning. Hence he could not make any commitment without consulting his ministers. It may be noted here that the *Maharaja* of Mayurbhanj transferred full powers on 9 December. However in view of this and having regard to the area, population and revenue of the State, he was left out of the discussion. But in the course of a year, the so-called popular ministers had run through the major part of the savings of the State, the administration was almost at a standstill and there was considerable unrest among the people. The *Maharaja* of Mayurbhanj, Pratap Chandra Bhanj Deo realised his mistake not to have merged his State along with the other States of Orissa.

He told that if something was not done immediately, the State would go bankrupt. He was loath to see the savings of the State, which he had built up with great difficulty, recklessly squandered away. He pleaded that the State should be taken over by the Government of India at once.[3] The formal taking over of the State by the Government of India took place in November 1948 in presence of Sarat Chandra Das, the Prime Minister of Mayurbhanj at Delhi and Mr. D.V. Rege, I.C.S. was appointed as the Chief Commissioner in Mayurbhanj. The administration under the Central Government lasted only for a period of less than two months during which the situation was closely studied by the Chief Commissioner and on his recommendation, the Government of India decided in favour of the merger of Mayurbhanj with Orissa.[4] Mayurbhanj merged with Orissa, as it was linguistically and culturally linked with the Province on 1st January 1949.

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19

MERGER OF ORISSA STATES; ECONOMIC PERSPECTIVES

Jaya Krushna Samal

The Princely States of Orissa numbering 26 had an area of 28,125 square miles and population of 3,173,395 in 1907. The aggregate income of all the States combined came to about one crore of rupees in 1938. This was much less than that of the Province of Orissa. Its population was only half of that contained in the latter.

The people of the States had everything in common with their neighbours in the British Orissa, except in the matter of administration. The States were governed, in contrast to the system in vogue in British Orissa, by rulers under direct advice and guidance of the Political officers. There was large population of tribals. The people subsisted generally on agricultural and forest produce.

The economic problems and activities in the *Garjats* (Princely States) had much similarity with those in British Orissa. Here the economy was also predominantly agricultural. But the economic situation of the States was more acute than that of British districts. The heavy taxation, forced labour and all other

modes of exaction made the lives of toiling people nearly unbearable. Several uprisings in the Princely States bear testimony to such inhuman practices which were rarely stemmed by the intervention of the States. The farmers in such tracts grew poorer and more helpless, none of their revolts brought them any remedy against oppressive practices. The intolerable economic condition of the States can be mainly distributed to two factors i.e. Feudal character of the states and the Imperial policy of the British.

The people were living in barbaric Feudal conditions. There was no rule of law. Civil liberty was crushed. The peasants in all most all States had no rights in agricultural land. They could neither sell nor mortgage nor transfer it without permission of the authorities. The maintenance of Princely status was an expensive business and compelled the Princes to extort money from their subjects in every possible way.

The policy of the Government of India with regard to States was determined by political and imperial considerations. The Political Department was of opinion that any apprehension in the mind of the smaller rulers that their status and dignity were insecure would be dangerous to the imperial interest. Hence, it was the settled policy of the Government of India to allow the ruler to deal with his subjects as he liked as long as he avoided undue publicity. The British Government deliberately adopted the policy of raising the status of the rulers.

In these circumstances, gross misrule and oppression prevailed in the States leading to progressive deterioration of the

economic condition of the peasantry. The economic policy of the rulers was not in keeping with the spirit of the time and did not satisfy the modest needs of the people while the people groaned under the weight of taxation, forced labour and other contributions. The nation-building departments were being systematically starved. The quality of what little work they produced was very poor. The poverty of the *Garjat* had reached such phenomenal depth that most people were living just at the subsistence level. This had given occasion to series of popular risings. The years 1938-39 saw the watermark of the development of People's Movements in the States. There agitations which often took violent turn brought to light the problems of maladministration, backwardness and poverty in the States. It became quite clear even to the rank and file that all-round development of the States only could be possible if the Princely States were merged with the Province of Orissa.

UNJUST AND INEQUITABLE LAND REVENUE SYSTEM:

The land revenue system was a simple one and was practically homogeneous throughout the States. In every State, periodical settlements were made for the assessment of land revenue. The land revenue was collected through the big farmers called *gauntias, ganjus, sarbarakars, pradhans and thikadars.* After 1885, the States followed as far as possible the development of land revenue system of British Orissa to which they were attached for administrative purpose.

So far as records go, attempts were made for systematic land revenue settlements in most of the States after 1905. What

was done earlier, was to have an eye estimation or by a rough measurement with a pole. After 1905, most of the States had some sort of traverse and cadastral survey, however, unsatisfactory.

The States did not follow any definite system of settlement and the work done in any settlement generally followed the method in which Settlement Officer had his training in the province from which he was deputed for the work. Generally speaking, throughout the States, both survey and settlements had been done by officers who held no higher post than that of the Assistant Settlement Officer in provincial settlements. Until the merger of the States, most of them failed to get a complete and accurate survey.

The States had no settlement principles or rules of their own, nor was there any formal application of any particular system. In the matter of the classification of villages and lands, on the whole, much arbitrariness had prevailed. Each Settlement Officer had more or less given scope to his own previous training and background without studying proper conditions of the States. As Ramadhyani observed "Settlement were in a fact, regarded as merely a means to augment the revenue and the method adopted was of little importance so long as this purpose was served."[1]

As regards the period of settlement, much variety and capriciousness prevailed. The term varied from 7 to 20 years, most States having 10 to 15 years. The period of settlement in the Province was generally, minimum 30 years. The State and the cultivators found a lot of harassment and loss in such short-term

settlements. Besides, frequent settlement resulted in the continued increase of land revenue.

Economic conditions in the States had not been changing at any great rate. So it was not desirable to make a settlement after 10 or 15 years. R.K. Ramadhyani remarked: "Even taking the underdeveloped condition of many of the States in to account, the pace of development is in no case sufficient to warrant consideration of a resettlement within a shorter period than 20 years and even then, that period can not be applied as a hard and fast rule irrespective of the circumstances. Shorter periods have in fact been found impracticable; the main consideration should be whether profits from agriculture have increased sufficiently to justify the imposition of an extra burden on the agriculturists,"[2]

The short term settlements, lack of sound settlement principles, absence of revenue laws, ignorance of the Settlement Officers about the condition of the States resulted in high assessment of land revenue. Land was taxed without regard to the capacity of the peasants to pay. The scientific principles of land revenue assessment evolved by the experts of the British Government in India were not observed by the rulers of these States. Land revenue in British Orissa was considered to be high. But the same rent in the States was higher still and there was an widespread demand for its substantial reduction. Whereas in British Orissa, the rent per acre never exceeded one rupee six annas per acre, but in Orissa States it ranged between two rupees to seven rupees. Rent in kind existed in the tribal areas of several States like Keonjhar and Nayagarh causing intolerable hardship to

the tribals as it was liable to corrupt practices in measuring and collecting it. The Orissa States Enquiry Committee observed: "In a poverty stricken area which has no other source of income except land, this heavy and inequitable burden has broken the backbone of the peasantry and created conditions ripe for an agrarian revolution, a mild type of which has already manifested itself in several States in Orissa."[3]

The land revenue was collected through the village headman, in fact, he was responsible for the revenue of the village. Practically in every State the village headman whether he was known as *sarbarakar* or *thikadar* or *gauntia* in the village, had responsibility for the payment of the entire village revenue to the State. The cultivators were of course expected to pay the land revenue to him, but from the point of view of the State, it mattered little whether, at the time the revenue fell due, all of them had paid the headman or not. The ruler did not trouble how the amount assessed on a village was raised so long as it was paid.

If the ryot failed to pay the revenue on the fixed date or the headman did not pay the land revenue to the State on the due date, the question of recovery arose. The process of recovery was as follows :

Generally speaking, wherever default was made by a headman with responsibility, he was proceeded against in the first instance. A notice or sometimes a warrant of attachment of movables was issued against him. If he did not pay, the movables were put to auction. If this did not result in recovery, the

headman might be ejected and the post auctioned or resettled otherwise.

The ryots were required to pay the rent in two or three instalments to the headman. Headman could submit to the ruler a list of tenants failing to pay the rent in due time, if he had paid the rent in due time i.e, demand of the whole village, out of his pocket. If the defaulting tenant did not pay the revenue inspite of repeated warning of the State Authority, either the Ruler or the headman proceeded to recover the dues by filing a case against him. For the recovery of arrears, the movable and immovable property of the tenants were attached usually and sold if necessity arose.

The tenants in general faced a great difficulty in paying their high rents. Most of them had to depend on the sale of paddy in order to do so. Some had to raise necessary funds by selling their gold ornaments and others by labour under the forest and public works contractors. Moreover, the tenants suffered a lot due to the corrupt practices of the headman. The very common corruptions practised by them were extracting more from the *ryots*, neglecting to issue proper rent receipts to them, utlising the services of the *ryots* as *bethi* for their personal cause and putting them to trouble in many other ways.

The coercive process for the recovery of revenue ruined many *ryots*, but it was said that these were necessary to safeguard the State's interest. Attachment of movable property was universal and usually effective method of recovery. Apart from the movable property, standing crops of the tenants were

attached. There were also numerous instances of the ejection of the cultivators from the holdings.[4]

The ejection of a cultivator from his holding was unjustified in many ways. Cultivator had either paid the value of the land or had given it the value it possessed. To deprive him of the whole of the land for the land revenue which was usually a small amount, was unfair. It deprived him of his source of livelihood and made him a labourer. Ejection from a portion of the land or sale of a portion sufficient to cover the arrears did not seem to offer satisfactory solution. R.K. Ramadhyani remarked : "Neither sale nor ejection should be a common or readily practised mode of recovery : if a cultivator fails to pay his revenue even at the possibility of his land being put to sale, it is usually because of genuine inability to pay and if this process has to be resorted to except rarely, it is a sign that there is something wrong which only an unimaginative administration will overlook."[5]

In 1938 the Orissa States' Enquiry Committee observed : " The agrarian situation in these States is getting more acute everyday by the increase in rents, which knows no check aggravated by the present economic depression. The peasantry is naturally restive and shows signs of impatience for lightening of the burden. Much valuable land remains uncultivated as the outside people are not attracted by the conditions on which it is given on rent. Insecurity of tenure and liability to arbitrary increase in rent are the two stumbling blocks which create serious difficulties in the way of increasing cultivation over vast blocks of rich land which might bring prosperity to the local population

and add substantially to the State treasury."[6] There occurred series of spontaneous and sporadic risings of the peasants in protest against the frequent evictions from the lands, excessive land-revenue demand and imposition of various Feudal dues.

HEAVY TAXATION AND OPPRESSIVE EXACTIONS :

After 1905, under pressure from the Political Department, the tendency for a Ruler was naturally "to try and maintain his own standard as well as to provide an adequate administration". This could scarcely be done except "by increasing the burden of taxation on the people in various ways, proper and improper and augmenting the revenue". In most of the States, there had been a tendency to extract the largest revenue possible but it could not be said that serious attempt had been made to provide an adequate administrative machinery. In 1946 R.K. Ramadhyani remarked : "It is as a result of this tendency that there has been so many monopolies, export duties and royalties in the recent past and to some extent exist now, it is chiefly on account of this fact that settlements of land revenue are more frequent than in the districts, that there has been no revenue law which could tie down the ruler's hands, that there have been and are so many ceases and exactions and numerous corrupt practices".[7]

The system of taxation prevailing in these states defied all cannos of sound finance. Apart from high rent and arbitrary enhancement of rent the other dues which injuriously affected the cultivators and agricultural interests were court fees, mutation fees, fees for petition writers, stamp duties and registration fees which were rather high in some states. Before, 1948 land revenue

was never suspended or remitted for any cause practically in all the States.

The export duties were levied on agricultural produce in most states. This was done to discourage export on the ground that there was shortage of foodgrains. Some argued that this harmed interests of the cultivators as the price of the agricultural produce did not rise. Compulsion to sell within the state itself amounted "to denying the cultivator the facilities of large markets and communication which the state itself is unable or unwilling to provide".[8] On the other hand, it was a blessing in disguise in the sense that the terrible famine did not occur in the states.

In addition to the dues mentioned above, there were variety of cesses which had often been imposed at any time, and without a definite purpose being mentioned in some cases. The cesses were imposed at so much per rupee of land revenue and thus formed an addition to the land revenue.. They varied in nature from a religious cess, to the ceases meant for schools, roads or dispensaries, etc. apart from the communication rates called "Miscellaneous" or "local" cess. R.K. Ramadhyani observed that the cesses imposed in the states amounted to a considerable enhancement of land revenue. In Patna State, the addition to the land revenue came to about 7 annas in the rupee.[9]

There were some arguments in favour of these abnoxious levies which had no foundation at all. The most important argument was that the assessment of land revenue was low. In actual practice in most of the States there were bitter complaints of over-assessment. The perusal of settlement reports did not

show that there had been deliberate under-assessment in any State on any account. So there was no reason for imposing cesses.[10]

Added to this there were "numerous other taxes, fees, salamies, levies and monopolies, education cess varying between half anna to two annas three pies per rupee of rent, hospital cess varying between half anna to one anna six pies per rupee of rent, forest cess varying between half anna to one anna three pies per rupee of rent, road cess or miscellaneous cess varying between six annas to one anna and six pies per rupee of rent (such cesses were levied in lieu of *bethi* and *beggar* but in actual practice this excessive cess was collected over and above the *bethi* which was also realised as before in many states); grazing fee at the one anna to Rs. 1-4-0 per cattle per year, tax on industrial castes, special cess on sugarcane, cess for using sugarcane crushing machine, tax on landless labourers, fruit cess, cess for exporting grain or merchandise, fee for adoption, *salami* for permitting widows to adopt (and such fee was in many states levied at the rate of Rs.5/- or there about per acre of land), in many states levy of income tax, tax on salt , kerosene, *bidi*, tabacoo, *pan*, cocoanut, coir, meat and many other articles and necessaries, of life through monopoly, in some states special fees for permitting use of double plank doors, use of any head-dress, use of palanquins, tax on plough and many other taxes have been levied."[11]

In a poverty stricken area which had no other source of income except land, this heavy and inequitous burden of taxation had ruined the peasantry. Besides being ground down by a crushing burden of inequitable taxation, and deprived of all

elementary rights of citizenship, the people in these states were suffering under a heavy dead-weight of customs, usages and exactions, which, one might say, had nearly taken the life out of them.

The system of *Bethi* or unpaid labour was in force in all the states. It had been legitimised through years of practice in tune with the temper of sub servience inculcated in the progenies of tenants from their infancy. It was considered to be an obligation on part of the tenants in allegiance to his master who proved him with sustenance and conferred on him privileges that made his survival possible. Any tenant could be called upon by the ruler or his officials to contribute his labour in satisfaction of his master's demand. The master was not obliged to pay for his tenants work since it was a part of his moral responsibility to act according to the will of his master. R.K. Ramdhyani commented, "Labour is dirt-cheap in this country and to insist upon free or unpaid labour is the height of callousness".[12]

The *Bethi* system or rendering service to the King on working without wages in some projects like road, construction of building, embankments and digging of canals had been constant means of exploiting working people and tenants of small holdings which went on without any fear of state intervention. The King and his underlings did enjoy elaborate rights to engage the poor in any project without paying them even a scant amount for such hard toil. The Keonjhar Peasant Uprising of 1891 is an instance of the toiling people reacting to the oppressive system of *bethi* which was done under the supervision of cruel managers of

the state who even refuged to allow the labourers any cooking time. The Orissa States Enquiry Committee observed "Of all the exactions under which the peasant is suffering, *bethi* is the most oppressive. It keeps him in grinding poverty; what is worse, it prevents his emergence from a state of serfdom".[13]

Another irregular levy was rasad or forced requisition of provisions. *Rasad* was supplied to officers and their camp staff in the quantities indicated. Failure to render *bethi, begar* or to supply rasad in accordance with these rules rendered a tenant liable to ejection from his holding. The provision for payment of *rasad* at current market price was honoured more in its breach than in its observance. Generally speaking, no payment was made for *rasad.*

Magan was forced requisition of money on ceremonial occasions. The tenants had to pay about one fourth of their annual land rent on several ceremonies such as the marriages, thread and ear-piercing ceremonies of the *Raja*, heir-apparent and the eldest *Raj Kumari. Suniya bethi* or New Year presents was another exaction imposed on the tenants. People were asked to contribute about Rs. 0-0-6 in the rupee of land rent to the village headmen who presented the amount to the *Raja* on the New Year Day, and such other occasions. Originally it was supposed to be voluntary, but latter it had assumed a compulsory character. Nobody could escape from it. This forced contribution existed all over the Orissa States.[14]

This extra taxation and various Feudal dues brought untold sufferings to the people of the States and had broken the

backbone of the peasantry. The major portion of the income of the Princes was spent on their luxuries. Almost nothing was done to ameliorate the miseries of the peasants. In this circumstances material condition of the peasants was deteriorating rapidly, A large part of the peasantry, especially the tribals were upto their lips in debt. The increasing distress of the landless people led them to emigrate to Jamsedpur, Assam and Rangoon to look out their livelihood. The growth of deep poverty made the people of the states desperate and led them to revolt many a time in the hope of improving their lot.

FACTORS HINDERING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT :

Recognising great political awareness among the people of the States, the British authorities of Orissa tried to impress upon the chiefs the need for governing their States in a better way. The officers of the British Orissa were deputed to help them in organising their administration on modern lines. In 1905, the post of Political Agent was created to encourage the Chiefs to govern their States efficiently and in the interest of the people. The Political Agent was to act as the friend, guide and philosopher of the King.

Under the pressure of the changing political condition, the Princes adopted some measures to remove the economic discontent of the people. Most of the States had detailed survey and settlements of revenue conducted by the Settlement Officers deputed from the British Orissa. In several States efforts were made in the direction of granting concessions on many matters like the right to transfer *ryoti* right, the liberalisation of *bethi* (forced labour) by commuting it to a money payment, the grant of

right over trees on the tenants holdings (except for trees of the reserved species), introduction of the Land Acquisition Act for payment of compensation in cases of compulsory acquisition of private lands for public purpose and reduction of cess where it was considered abnormal.[15]

The *darbar* administration encouraged and assisted the people to repair the old tanks and wells and construct the new ones with a view to provide by irrigation facilities. Two irrigation projects undertaken by the *Maharaja* of Mayurbhanja one at Balidiha and the other at Haldia irrigated 12,200 acres of land.[16] Chiefs of most States, recognising the value of the new varieties of crops actively fostered the planting of coconut, orange, lemon, mango and other fruit trees, stimulated the cultivation of cotton and sugarcane and induced people to try potato and other European Vegetables. Agricultural exhibition had been held to popularise new crops from time to time. In States like Bonai, Athmallik, Rairakhol, Bamra, Gangpur, Daspalla, Bouhd, Keonjhar, Dhenkanal, Talcher and Mayurbhanja, immigration was actively encouraged for the reclamation of lands. This led to the increase of cultivated lands.[17] Realising that *podu* cultivation was a wasteful system of cultivation, the States tried to check it by encouraging proper conservation of forest. Agricultural Department had been opened in several States to encourage and instruct the people in the improvement of agriculture. There were one or two agricultural farms in every State to acquaint the people how to grow various crops and supply good seeds.[18]

Further, very feeble efforts were made in the field of industries. All the cottage industries were carried on in a disorganised manner. The important cottage industries in the States were handloom weaving, pottery, making of brass and bell-metal utensils, carpentry, blacksmith, jewellery, oil-pressing, basket making, matmaking and lac pressing. The machine based industries like textile and tannery were setup in the States of Bolangir and Mayurbhanj after 1905.[19]

Besides the development of means of communication and establishment of markets gave an impetus to trade and commerce. The railways had been helpful in carrying in export and import trade of the States of Mayurbhanj, Kalahandi, Patna, Talcher and Gangpur. But it was carried on principally by outside traders. These halting steps obviously could not make any impact on the life of the people. The far-reaching fundamental and enormous changes were a crying need of the hour to bring about any improvement in the living condition of the people . The following factors hindered economic development of the States.

Firstly, the form of government of the States was autocratic and medieval. There was certainly a great deal of difference in the administrative efficiency reached by the two Orissas. While British Orissa was ruled according to law, the rule of law was virtually non-existent in the Princely Orissa. Parsonal rule characterised the administration of the States. The decisions were taken at the pleasure of the Rulers. Civil liberty did not exist. The people were very much harassed. There was not free press. There was no independent judiciary, judges were dependent on the whim of the Rulers for their tenure of service.

Consequently, misgovernment and maladministration was chronic in the States.

Secondly, the British Government followed a conciliatory policy towards the Chiefs throughout their rule on the interest of the stability of their rule under the British protection, the Princes grew more and more autocratic in their power and adopted exaction and repression as the standard norm of administration instead of trying to ameliorate the condition of the people. The spread of the National Movement made the British authorities alert about the grievances of the people of the States. At the same they were determined not to antagonise the Princes. So they hesitatingly and coutiuously used to persuade the Princes to do something for the welfare the people. The Orissa States Enquiry Committee observed: "The control at present exercised by the Political Officers over the Rulers is not effective, the Princes are given free hand and the people are afraid of bringing matter to the notice of the Political Officers".[20]

Thirdly, the agrarian system of the States was unjust, corrupt and decadent. Peasantry had no full land rights in all these States. He was liable to ejection in spite of its long possession and enjoyment for generations. They were heavily taxed without taking into consideration their ability to pay and productive capacity of the lands. Added to the crushing burden of taxation, there were fees, *salamies*, cesses, monopolies and irregular levies like *bethi* and *begari*, *magan*, rasad etc. which weighed heavily on the poor peasants.

Fourthly, luxurious living of the Princes was a major

factor that prevented the States from progressing economically. The rulers generally spent about half of the public revenues on themselves and their families. Besides, the sums earmarked on the state budgets for the domestic department, there were various other devices which the rulers and their advisers had found out by which a good portion of public money was diverted to the private treasury of the *Raja*. Hence, scanty sum was available for spending on welfare activities.[21]

The last but not least was the inadequacy of the financial resources This can be attributed to two factors. Firstly, the princes did not bother at all about the efficient financial management. Secondly, the States were more or less primitive for which there was no other means to add to the income except extracting from the peasants.

POPULAR MOVEMENTS AND INTEGRATION OF THE STATES:

Throughout the colonial rule, the people of Orissa States were struggling against the autocratic and oppressive rulers. The opposition to them was based on exploitation perpetrated by them. The inadequacy of financial resources, lack of sound financial management, and luxuries living of the princes were the reasons why they had adopted various irregular means for filling the exchequer. Taking the advantage of the poverty and ignorance that rendered the peasants supine and slavishly submissive, the princes developed highly complex and effective form of profiteering mechanism to rule the roost and to promote the cause of their parasitic survival.

The Princes enhanced the rent to unbearable limit as they wanted more money to defray the lavish expenses required to maintain the panoply of their status. Apart from arbitrary enhancement of taxes, Princes often imposed different types of cesses to fill their purse when they found that increase on rent might arouse suspicion. The exaction of illegal cesses gave rise to bitter feeling between *Raja* and his people, the one trying to enforce payment by adopting every possible means of coercion and the other opposing such an attempt by all means in his favour. In all these States, the tenants were harassed and exploited in several ways by means of certain traditional practices without scant regard for the principles of justice and fairness to activate the modes of revenue administration. Of all such measures of exploitation, four modes of occasional exaction i.e., *Bethi, Magan, Rasad* and *abwab* hit the peasants hard and left them emasculated without any feasible avenue for the mitigation of such miseries. These were the important factors behind series of popular uprisings that occurred in the Princely States of Orissa during the colonial rule. People in Nayagarh, Keonjhar, Mayurbhanj, Boudh, Bamra, Rairakhol, Ranpur, Nilgiri, Kalahandi, Talcher, Daspalla and Dhenkanal and some other states had spontaneously risen several times against arbitrary enhancement of land rent, *bethi* and other crying economic and political grievances. These sporadic agitations were suppressed with the assistance of the British police without yielding to the major demands of the peasants.

The growth of representative institutions was a remarkable feature of the historical change in British Orissa after

1935. They provided inspiration and encouragement to the people in the Princely States to agitate for popular government and civil liberty for the common people. The years 1938 and 1939 were a critical period when people in all the States rose against the rulers demanding mitigation of untold miseries and establishment of democratic government. These major peasant movements of the States were known as *Praja Mandal* Movements. At times the repressive measures to put down the uprisings led to large scale exodus. The large exodus of the people of Talcher to escape ruthless repression of the ruler drew the attention of the congress men and philanthropists. The infuriated mob of Ranpur murdered the Political Agent, Major Bazalgette who came to enquire about the grievances of the people. The tragic incident revealed that people were no longer prepared to bear with the misrule of the rulers acting as tyrants.

There occurred a number of peoples movements in the Princely States on which tribals actively participated. The imposition of various obnoxious levies and enforcement of *bethi* system, the system of payment of rent in kind and State monopoly in forest products such as lac, cocoons, Kendu leaves, hide and skin affected the economic life of the tribal people of Orissa States. When the situation became intolerable, they rose in revolt in protest against these exploitative practices.

There was hardly any doubt that major impetus to the merger of Orissa States was given by the popular agitations caused mainly by the evils of the economic system prevalent in the states. These popular risings brought to light deep poverty,

increasing miseries and ulter degradation of the people due to gross misrule and various corrupt practices of the rulers. The report of the Orissa States Enquiry Committee that was constituted in 1938 under the Chairmanship of Harekrushna Mahtab consequent upon the outbreak of the *Praja Mandal* Movement made shocking revelations about the prevalence of various kinds of illegalities, exactions and repression in Orissa States. It also pointed out that continuous oppression had made the people progressively impoverished and morally degraded to an extent which could not be imagined in civilised society".

The explosive agrarian situation in the states led to the appointment of R.K. Ramadhyani of Indian civil service to conduct detailed enquiry into the land revenue system of the Orissa States in 1941. His report brought to light many exploitative and undesirable practices that prevailed in the agrarian life in these states. He emphasised that atmosphere in all these states was already surcharged with tension. The introduction of agrarian reforms was urgent and that no time should be lost to introduce the reforms so as to bring the states on a par with the neighbouring provinces as far as it was possible and practicable.

A series of people movements and reports of these Enquiry Committees appointed in the wake of these movements contributed substantially towards the integration of the twenty four Princely States with the Province of Orissa in 1948-49. In view of the wider spread agitation of the people of the States against socio-economic ills and inability of the rulers to provide

popular and enlightened administration, the Orissa States Enquiry Committee felt imperative that Orissa States should be merged with the Province of Orissa. When H.K. Mahtab became the Prime Minister of Orissa in 1946, he worked indefatigably to effect the merger of these States with Orissa. Under the astute statesmanship of this great political leader and masterful diplomacy of Sardar Patel, 24 States were integrated with the Province of Orissa in 1948-49. Sereikalla and Kharswan were transferred to Bihar. In 1950 the territorial map of Orissa was redrawn with thirteen districts in place of the old six districts. Thus an era of socio-economic reconstruction of Orissa on modern lines was ushered in.

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LAND SYSTEM IN PRINCELY STATES OF ORISSA

Rajib Lochan Sahoo

The present study intends to understand the system of land control and land relations in the princely States of Orissa that were intricately linked to definite socio-economic and political roles. The Princely States of Orissa which were officially known as 'Tributary Mahals' were not subject to any regular survey and settlement of land like areas under British administration. The Cuttack Land Revenue Regulation XII of 1805 specially exempted them from the operation of the Regulations. The Tributary Mahals continued to be managed by the Political Department and the Commissioner of Orissa was appointed as the Superintendent of these Tributary Mahals until 1888 when the Chiefs of the Tributary Mahals were declared as rulers. Later on they were removed from the jurisdiction of the Commissioner of Orissa and along with the Chhatisgarh States Constituted the Eastern States Agency. The Agency itself was divided into two parts under two Political Agents, one for Chhatisgarh and the other for Orissa States.[1]

An essential preliminary to the assessment of land in India, was the preparation of a Cadastral Map by introducing a Cadastral survey in order to regulate the relations between the

landlord and the tenant.[2] But there was no system of detailed assessment of land in the Princely States of Orissa till about the beginning of British occupation though in the planes of Orissa, the Mughals have developed their own system of land revenue settlement. It appeared that the rulers in the States were satisfied by assessing the revenue of the entire village which they bestowed on contract basis through the village headman.[3]

By 1936 most of the Orissa States had traverse and cadastral survey, but in a number of States like Keonjhar, Bonai, Ranpur and Kalahandi there were large areas inhabited by aboriginals practicing shifting cultivation which had not been subjected even to a traverse survey.[5]

The Chief of the Orissa States were directed by the British authorities to consult the Commissioner of Orissa Division or the Political Officers, duly vested with power by the Lt. Governor of Bihar and Orissa in Council, in all important administrative matters including the settlement and collection of land revenue and imposition of other taxes. No Chief was permitted to make a general settlement of his state without consulting the British authorities.[6] Thus the ruling chiefs in the States were seen as a creature of political exigencies and requirements of British Imperialism. The feudalistic system was deliberately allowed to grow under the patronage of British Imperialism to secure selfish and hidden political ends.[7]

Land Tenures :

The various tenure holders that existed in the Princely States were broadly of four types such as-

i) Zamindars including *Illaqadars* or *pirpattidars* (where they existed).

ii) Holding of grants of whole villages or assignees of revenues of entire villages such as *Khorposhdars* (maintenance grantees), *debottars* (temple grants) and numerous other like grants for service rendered or for rendering services, grants to brahmins and *maths*, 'favour' grants (especially to relatives of Chiefs) etc.

iii) Grantees of service tenures on a quit rent, and

iv) The actual cultivating class or ryoti holdings.[8]

Zamindari Tenure :

Zamindari Tenures were hereditary feudal tenures comprising of a number of villages for which the Zamindar paid a small tribute to the Chief and he was liable to render military aid when required.[9] At one time the class of Zamindars, who were created for military purposes, were for most purposes independent and had their own criminal and Civil Administration in addition to revenue and forest administration, and used to enjoy powers of levying octroi, ferry dues, cattle pound dues etc. and maintained their own police as well as war like levies. But this practice gradually disappeared and by 1920 they were practically non-existent.[10]

Zamindaries being mostly very distant and inaccessible, control of the ruler over it was slack. Therefore, some Zamindaries were taken under management by the state for gross mismanagement or in-capacity or on account of minority. In land revenue matters, the rulers usually had adequate control and

settlements used to be made under their authority and land revenue and cesses were applicable to them in the similar manner as in the non-zaminadari areas.[11]

The Zamindars paid cesses on the occasion of marriage and funeral ceremonies of the Chief. The states having zamindari were Bamra, Bonai, Gangpur, Kalahandi, Keonjhar, Patna and Sonepur. In Kalahandi the Zamindars were the members of the royal family. In Patna and Sonepur they belonged to aboriginal races.[12]

Revenue-free Tenures :

These include grants called *Khorposh* for maintenance to various members of the ruling family, gift to the Gods and Brahmins known as *Debottor* or *Brahmottar* lands, and grants for good services done or as retainer of service which may be demanded. All the States had revenue-free tenures which was common feature even in British India. Obviously, the States incurred huge loss of revenue because of these revenue-free tenures.[13] These grants varied from entire villages or a single village to merely a portion of lands. In Dhenkanal the rulers relatives received extensive areas known as *khanja* or *Babuana*. Such grants were said to be no less than the Zamindaries.[14]

The grants to deities or temples which was known as *Debottar* grants were usually for deities inside the States, though in some cases grants were in favour of institutions/deities outside the states like Shri Jagannath Temple at Puri. Small grants of holdings made for purposes of village deities used to be managed by persons known as *Sebaits*, or marfatdars of the deities or by

the villagers. Other grants were usually managed by the ruler himself of a member of his family through the Debottar Department.[15]

The *Brahmmottar* grants, that were given to Brahmins, usually consisted of villages where they settled. They cultivated their land by hired labourers or servants.[16] The service jagirs which were rent free were given to persons engaged in the service of the rulers and to the villages such as beating drum on ceremonial occasions, washing cloth, barbers, astrologers, priests, the watchman, the blacksmith, the carpenters and the like. These grants were small extents of land and their demands were collectively borne by the villagers for their services. The non-commission soldiers of the native army or the Kashmir State Army were also exempted from taxes as per the recommendations of the Government of India in 1906.[17]

These alienation of State revenue in the form of revenue free grants increased in number and extent from time to time as rulers changed which had an adverse effect on the state's economy. Apart from that in most of the states the tenants under the grantees of even the whole villagers had insecurity of tenure, which inevitably demoralised the tenantry. Moreover, there were various ruling of Political Agents to the effect that no ruler was bound by the grants made by pre-decessors and rulers generally utilised this rule to punish such grantees as used to be considered undesirable. This naturally had a demoralising effect on the grantees themselves.[18]

Ryoti Tenure :

The ryoti tenure was more or less uniform throughout the states. In nearly all the states a ryot acquired rights in land as soon as he started cultivating it. No fixed period of possession to acquire his rights like twelve year rule provision in the Orissa Tenancy Act, 1913, which was vogue in British Orissa. Persons who cultivated the land of others on systems of cash rent or share cropping known as sanja etc. did not acquire any rights in the land and were mere tenants at will. The rents realised from them were higher than the occupancy ryots.[19] The occupancy ryots were only liable to be ejected on non-payment of the settled rents or in the event of his alienating by sale, deed or gift or mortgage, the whole or any portion of his holding, but an ejectment can not be affected except by order of the State Courts.[20]

Chandandars :

The 'Chandandar' tenure in some states was nothing more than a name given to a person who used to hold a house site but had no cultivation, particularly in the village of residence. A chandandar only held a house site, with perhaps a garden in the village of residence, and was either a non-agriculturist, or cultivates land in another village. In the western group of states the house sites were not surveyed separately and no individual right on such land was recognised.[21]

Land Revenue Settlement & Structure of rent :

The native governments throughout the greater part of India took a share of the produce as land revenue. In the Princely States of Orissa, the revenue was accepted in kind as a share of the produce. The great inconveniences of such a system of

revenue collection - the large staff of officials required, the troublesome storage of grain, harassment and oppression can however be easily understood. The system was, therefore, under native rule, gradually subjected to various modifications.[22]

The Land Revenue Administration was practically homogenous throughout the States of Orissa. There was a common agrarian pattern on the States as a whole. Ownership of the land rested with the state but the right of occupancy remained with the actual cultivators so long as they paid their rents.[23]

The land tax was based on an average rate all through the States, like in other parts of India. The assessment of tax was linked with the productive capacity or income from the land. In view of this, proper assessment of land by accurate survey of the surface of the land was essential for demarcating the area cultivated or in the possession of individual persons and the possible extension of cultivation in the area.[24] But prior to 1905 no attempts were made for systematic land survey and settlements in most of the States. What was earlier done was to have an eye estimation or by a rough measurement with a pole. After 1905 most of the states had detailed traverse and cadastral survey, however unsatisfactory. In the States like Keonjhar, Bonai, Ranpur and Kalahandi there were large areas inhabited by aboriginals practicing shifting cultivation which had not been subjected to a traverse survey.[25]

R.K.Ramdhyani, the Settlement Officer felt the urgent need of having a competent joint agency for the framing of settlement rules and instructions and for the actual supervision of

the settlement work in the Princely States. The importance of such a controlling agency was stressed as the independent states were not viewed as capable of employing real competent settlement staff.[26]

The Princely States of Orissa, far from like the parts of Orissa under the British rule, had no settlement principles or rules of their own. Neither was there any formal application of any particular system. As a result much arbitrariness prevailed.

The period of revenue settlement in the states varies from 7 to 20 years. In most states the settlement was for a period of 10 or 15 years. The question of permanent settlement of revenue or 30 years temporary settlement did not arise in the States. In the 19th century due to lack of proper survey and settlement operations no record of rights existed, though the chiefs got the revenue as usual and even they received their share in the profits arising from the enormous amount of new cultivation.[27]

In some states like Bonai, Keonjhar, Sonepur, Hindol Kandhamal and Ranpur rents were paid in kind. The articles paid in kind were rice, gheė, molasses and pulses for which a very low rebate in the cash rental was allowed.[28] Though the cultivators especially the aboriginals favoured the payment of rent in kind.[29] Yet the same was not free from corrupt practices. Officials indulged in corrupt practices while measuring and collecting rent in kind and its subsequent disposal to the state treasury.[30]

The village headman occupied a prominent position in the

land revenue administration in the states. He was the immediate and only intermediary between the *Raja* and the tenants. The headman was considered a public servant and the chiefs framed certain rules applicable for them. For misbehavior, breach of the terms of the lease and for other reasons he was liable to be ejected from the assignment. He was not a tenure holder or a proprietor though he had, in many cases, paid a heavy *salami* or premium to be the headman.[31]

The relatives of the ruling chiefs, in many cases, were favoured with the grant of lucrative villages. Apart from the favoured grants, all the lands in a village were given to the village headman. He collected the rents and abwab payable to him, and for this work he received either a commission or was entitled to hold the *Bhogra* land.[32]

Where the headman received commission for their service the amount was 5 to 15 percent and in case of *Bhogra* land the grant varied from 20 to 25 percent of the total land of the village.[33] The *Bhogra* lands in all the states excepting Gangpur were assessed and the headmen paid for them. Neverthless, he got the best lands. In addition to that he, received aid or *belhi* from the villagers to cultivate the *Bhogra* land. If any headman was unable to collect rent he was provided assistance from the state subject to prior payment of the total revenue of his area. The headman was permitted, though unofficially, to partition his *Bhogra* land among his family members.[34]

The village headman was known as *thikadar, sarbarakar* or *gauntia*. The rulers did not interfere how the revenue was

assessed and collected. The wrong in fixing the responsibility of collecting the entire revenue on the headman was that he has to pay the revenue first whether ryots pay or not. He often bore the expenses of a civil suit against the defaulting cultivators.[35]

Dates were fixed by the headman on which day the ryots had to pay the land revenue. However, the ryots were granted privilege to pay the revenue in two or three instalments during the specified months in the year.[36] Most of the cultivators paid the revenue by selling rice crop.[37]

When the headmen failed to pay the land revenue to the state in due date a notice or sometimes a warrant was issued against him. If he did not pay, his movable properties were put to auction. If this did not yield the recovery the headman was liable to be ejected and his post was auctioned and resettled otherwise. Similarly, the movable properties of the defaulting tenants were attached for recovering the revenue arrears. This process of recovery of revenue ruined the tenants though it was defended as the only way to safeguard the interest of the state. Attachment of even the standing crops of the defaulting tenants were common practice though not their ejection from the holdings.[38]

In the absence of any headman, the rulers appointed *patwaris*, Tahasildars or amins for collection of land revenue the practice of which was reported to be unsatisfactory as these newly appointed Collectors, being direct agents and mostly non-residents in the village, unhesitatingly used coercive process for the realisation of revenue which caused much hardship to the tenants.[39]

Tenancy Regulations :

British Orissa had well defined tenancy regulations and application of Rent Acts. But such laws were not made in any of the Princely States. What existed in some state was a list of practices or rights jotted down in the course of a settlement report by the settlement officer, or a document of conditions on the headman of a village. Some of the states like Narasingpur, Hindol and Patna introduced revenue laws for the first time in 1939-40. They were not adequate. In some states such as Nilgiri, Baramba and Rairakhol even these did not exist. Though in Mayurbhanj a Tenancy Regulation was introduced in 1910 which was based mainly on certain provisions of the Bengal Tenancy Act, 1885. The Mayurbhanj Tenancy Regulation aimed at protecting the rights of tenants against arbitrary enhancement of rent and indiscriminate ejectment by the intermediaries.[40]

The absence of revenue laws was the root of the various evils in the land revenue administration in the states. Such a state of affairs allowed full scope to the rulers to do what was financially advantageous to them.[41]

Moreover, the policy of non-interference by the British in the matters of internal admnistration of the states gave the rulers a free chart to deal with the subjects in any manner they preferred. The rulers did not take initiative in land reforms as they took interest in maintaining their dignity and pageantry by all possible means.[42]

Ryots Rights :

The *ryot* did not enjoy security of tenure in the States.

He did not have the right to convert his land for non-agricultural purposes such as building a house. In some states like Nilgiri conversion was not permitted and penalty was imposed in case of such conversion even to the extent of eviction from the land. However, the penalty was condoned by levying *salami*.[43]

In most states ryots had no right to trees on their holdings, though he was allowed to enjoy the fruits of trees on his holdings.[44] A feature of the lot of the ryots for which there were much agitation from time to time was the liability to forced labour, or rendering of commodities free or at privileged rates, either to the ruler or to the headman.[45] The right of the chiefs or headmen to choose the cultivators and to enhance the rent arbitrarily was most unfortunate.[46] As the modern indulgences of a civilized society necessitated more expenditures on the part of the Feudatory Chiefs, the burden ultimately fell on the poor cultivators. Situation went from bad to worse when forced methods of extortion and punishment were let loose on the cultivators when they failed to meet the increasing demand of their masters.[47]

Thus, the land relations in the princely states of Orissa before independence was the relic of the feudal institutions. The unprincipled system of taxation and land rights in addition to the ever increasing burden of revenue broke the backbone of the cultivators whose only source of income was from the land. In majority of the states the cultivators were merely tenants-at-will. Insecurity of tenure, abnormal rates of rent and arbitrary increase in rents were often the greatest obstacles to an increasing cultivation of vast areas of land, calculated to add to the state

exchequer, the general happiness and economic welfare of the subjects. The unhappy land relations in the states contributed to the outbreak of organised antifeudal movements and risings especially during the last two decades before India's independence which did excite sympathy and involvement in their brethren in British Orissa.

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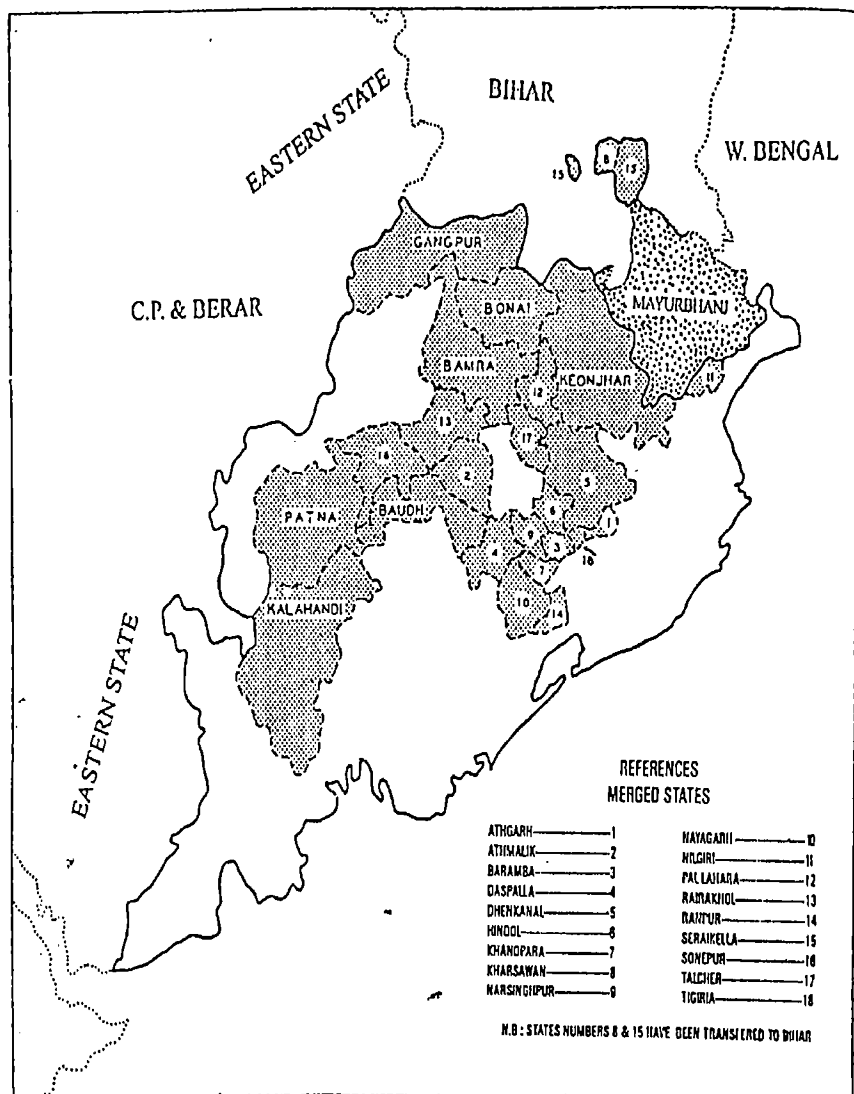
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